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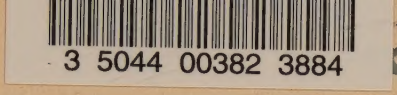
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POLLY MASSON

POLLY MASSON

BY

WILLIAM H. MOORE

Author of "The Clash" etc.

1919

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To HENRY BUTTON

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POLLY MASSON

CHAPTER THE FIRST

INTRODUCING WILLIAM LARNED, M.P.

MR. LARNED snapped his fingers. Obediently a page ran up the narrow aisle to Mr. Larned's seat, and immediately ran down again carrying with him a note to the Prime Minister's desk.

Thus began the eruption of William Larned's political career.

There was in the Chamber that afternoon none of the signs which usually mark untoward events in the House of Commons. That usually trustworthy barometer, the press-gallery, signalled dullness; it was all but deserted. For a full hour the Member for Holstein had held the floor, and still droned out his recital of the chronic woes of agriculture. On the back benches of the Chamber, three members from the Maritime Provinces were grouped together and talked in audible undertones of things that were apparently not serious; for one of them, in an absent-minded way, was preparing a paper dart and casting covert glances at a somnolent representative from Saskatchewan.

The House was bored, although here and there sat members who listened, and now and then pounded their desks in approval.

The House had its quorum, and that was all. The Speaker, sitting upright in his high-back chair, gazing stonily into space, might have been thinking of the fishing up the Gatineau, rather than of the necessity of maintaining a quorum and the rules of the House. But, of course, it is presumptuous—and may be *lèse majesté* to speculate upon the thoughts of a Speaker of Parliament.

Such was the condition of the House of Commons on an afternoon which I hope will be of interest to the reader, since it is of interest in the career of William Larned, member for East Badmington in the Canadian Parliament. No. It was not quite all the condition, for a keen observer might have seen in the facile shoulders of the Leader of the Opposition, a poise of satisfaction, and might have detected that while his eyes were directed to a book on his desk, his ears were attentive to the words of the droning member from Holstein.

Across the Prime Minister's face there ran just the shadow of a frown, when the page laid Mr. Larned's note on the desk and politely stood to attention awaiting an answer. Sir Henry laid down his papers and read the message, which ran as follows: "May I speak with you to-night on the subject before the House?" For a moment he hesitated, and then scribbled underneath the interrogation, "Come home with me to dinner."

The Member was obviously pleased with the answer and, strangely enough, read it twice over and then carefully folding the paper put it in his railway-certificate case.

As Sir Henry Bateman and Mr. Larned are motoring homewards, it may be well to enquire into the manner of the coming of Larned to Parliament. For the reader has possibly even now discerned, if not through evidence of ability, then through intuition, that Destiny had marked for him a high place in the political life of the country.

For twenty years previous to Larned's representation, East Badmington had been represented by Thomas Dobbins. The reader may not have remembered, for Dobbins is now an ex-M.P., and no one is quite so forgotten as the man who, desperately struggling to preserve the respect paid to position, writes ex-M.P. after his name.

Thomas Dobbins was by no means the least worthy of the men who have, as members of the Commons, presided over the destinies of Canada. Having no ability which

was not equally shared by the average citizen, he professed none. Exciting no admiration, Mr. Dobbin's ability drew upon its possessor none of that envy which so frequently accounts for the tombstones in the vast, silent, political graveyard. And at Ottawa, Thomas Dobbins was a favourite. During his long tenure of office, not once had he suggested an idea of reform so distasteful to sober-minded Ministers, nor had he evinced the slightest sympathy for the reforming proclivities of his occasionally hot-headed desk-mates.

Only a painstaking and competent observer would have seen in Thomas Dobbins' political career germs of disruption. Such an observer would have found the Member for East Badmington afflicted with numerous impecunious relatives having a contagious desire to live at the country's expense. And, to make matters more embarrassing, Mrs. Dobbins (née Dobbs) possessed an equal number of relatives, equally impecunious, and equally desirous of drawing moderate (but secure) incomes from the country's treasury.

"You had your Cousin Henry's eldest boy appointed to the Custom's Service; is it fair that my Sister Anne's eldest daughter should be kept out of the Inland Revenue Department because you refuse to endorse her application?" Mrs. Dobbins had argued with her husband. "To whom do you owe your success, but to me? Who is it that looks after the constituency while you spend your precious months at Ottawa?" she asked. "Surely a Dobbs is as good as a Dobbins!" And there was an undeniable element of truth in the statement. From reasoning, Mrs. Dobbins habitually turned to invective, and as habitually found a final refuge in tears. Women have an unfair advantage in politics which, in course of time, will have a more generally recognised place in political philosophy. Thereafter, for each Dobbins that was appointed to the Service, a place had to be found for a Dobbs.

The dénouement came when, on the eve of a general election, there appeared in *The Daily Moon,* a family-

tree setting forth in graphic detail the names of all the Dobbins and all the Dobbs who lived at the country's expense. Beneath each name the designer had placed (in brackets) the annual amount which the beneficiary received from the Treasury, and had cleverly made use of large type in displaying the total. The public was shocked, and the more shocked because *The Daily Moon* had hitherto been unfaltering in its support of Dobbins and "The Party".

Then came McMichael.

"Nepotism must be abolished," he resolutely declared in an interview to a reporter of *The Daily Moon*; "I care not where it exists. The Civil Service must be reformed; the country must be served by the country's best men. I stand unalterably by that principle."

Peter McMichael's announcement made nepotism an issue—and naturally, since Peter McMichael was himself a Conservative. Similar words from a man in Opposition would not have brought even a ripple of excitement. It is the business of the Opposition to say disagreeable things, and most people realise that behind their saying is simply a desire to undo and do up again. Peter McMichael was more than a Conservative; he was president of the great ironmonger's works of Peter McMichael & Sons, Limited,—although, for that matter, most ironmongers are Conservatives in Canada. Having raised his hand against nepotism, Peter McMichael did not falter. He gave more interviews. *The Daily Sun,* of Opposition allegiance, published his views on the subject, and for days both *Moon* and *Sun* startled their readers by red-inked headlines of exposure of the nepotistic affairs of the unfortunate Thomas Dobbins, with the continuing protest of Peter McMichael. Having become the man of the hour before a general election, it was not strange that he should graciously consent to contest the party nomination under the banner of Civil Service Reform.

But the Dobbinites were not to be readily dislodged. If the possession of a large family connection had pushed Thomas Dobbins into trouble, it now promised to pull him out. The clans of Dobbins and Dobbs stood together in support of the Old Régime. Fortunately, out of the district's plenitude of patronage, Thomas Dobbins had appointed others than his own and his wife's relatives to the Civil Service. Many of those whom Dobbins had served in various ways and their friends (strangely, as some cynics may consider) rallied to his assistance.

Counter-charges were flung into the press. The McMichaelans had also fed at the country's trough. The great iron-works had become great by protection; they had been given contracts by the Government which involved interesting "extras"; they had entered into an unholy alliance with competitors in restraint of trade; and, worst of all from a political angle, had employed foreigners (some alleged Chinamen) at less than union wages.

The Opposition, for years scarcely daring to nominate a candidate, and nominating one only to face inevitable defeat, plucked up its courage and prepared for a contest with a strange new-born hope of success.

Naturally, as the day of election drew near, the charges became more prolific and more serious. Having been in the past intimately associated, the Dobbinites and McMichaelans had little difficulty in each proving the other unworthy of public confidence. The Opposition candidate walked with sprightly step, and attempted (without success) to buy space on the bill-boards for a lithographed poster of himself and the advice: "Vote for Barnes and Clean Government."

In haste came the Big Man from the Capital. With anxious brow he surveyed the field. The faithful waited in the corridor of the *Queen Anne Hotel* nervously biting the ends of their cigars, as even the coolest and most experienced of men will do when called upon to pass judgment on momentous matters.

On the day of the Big Man's arrival, *The Daily Moon* contained a leading editorial demanding in the name of the Party and the country that "new blood" and "young blood" be injected into Parliament by way of the East Badmington constituency. "This is a country of young men," stated the editor of *The Moon,* "and why," he asked, "should they not have a voice in the councils of the nation?"

As no one was able to state why a young man should not sit in Parliament, everyone began to speculate as to which of the many willing young men in East Badmington was going to sit in Parliament. The suspense was not of long duration. By one of those undercurrents, unintelligible to the politically-inexperienced, men's minds turned as if by instinct to William Larned. He was president of the Young Men's Liberal-Conservative Association and, of course, possessed the right blood to carry Badmington through her troubled hours. Having graduated from the University and the law-school a few years previously, he had ostensibly entered upon the practice of law, but in reality upon the practice of politics. Passing through the offices of the ward association, Larned had been elected only a few months before to the presidency of a newly-organised young men's political club. Few knew of his family; certainly Larneds were neither numerous nor politically-prominent in Badmington, and the new member was not likely to recommit the cardinal sin of the old. He was neither merchant nor manufacturer, and an extremely limited law practice had carried him into few financial and trade entanglements; he was thus not likely to seek patronage for himself in the shape of government supplies.

The Big Man from Ottawa, with the discernment of experience, found in Larned an admirable candidate; certainly an inoffensive one, a valuable recommendation for a seat in Parliament. Having decided upon a candidate, all other difficulties disappeared under the magic hand of the Big Man. Dobbins was called into the

blue parlour of the *Queen Anne* and left with the promise of the first senatorial vacancy, secretly comforted by the knowledge that his friend, William Larned, would be his successor. Peter McMichael, shortly afterwards closeted in the blue parlour, was assured that after the storm had blown over, he should receive the usual contracts, and felt a certain satisfaction that his friend, William Larned, would be in Parliament. After all, at a later and more auspicious day, it might be easy to arrange with young Larned to make way for one who would more worthily represent the constituency.

"The lucky dark horse!" remarked Blain over the luncheon table of the Union Club when the settlement of the East Badmington troubles was announced.

"Nonsense," remonstrated Sloane, reaching for the olives. "Have you followed Larned's career?"

"I have scarcely seen the man since we left the university."

"That was to be expected," replied Sloane. "There is no luck in his nomination. Larned has been working for it night and day the past several years. He has served his time in the ward association. He is a member of all the lodges in town—except the Knights of Columbus—and not unusually attends three or four meetings in a single night. Can you imagine Billy Larned in hot, stuffy lodge-rooms solemnly repeating: 'Eeny, meeny, miney, mo', to blind-folded men and women for the satisfaction of the thing? Larned has attended every society picnic that has been held from East Badmington during the past five years. He knows most men in East Badmington by name, and what is more: he knows the sizes and ages of their families. He has an uncanny memory for names. Larned is bound to be successful."

"By the way, what is success?" asked Blain.

"One of the most successful men I know, is a popped-corn vendor at the base-ball games," answered Evans. "Personally, I never eat popped-corn except at a base-ball

game, and there are thousands like me. But there is a compelling something in that popped-corn, or the man who sells it, which is irresistible. Seeing the vendor on the ferry one day, I enquired into the cause of his success. 'I am a specialist,' he told me. 'I think of nothing but popped-corn seven days in the week. I use only the best butter in my mixture; I weigh my salt to the fraction of an ounce, and pop my corn within a second of the right time. You may have noticed that I have different calls in appealing to my customers. I buy them from a man in New York, who follows the big athletic events.' 'The last word in efficiency,' I suggested. 'Exactly,' said he. 'I am the popped-corn king of Badmington,' he boasted, apparently as proud as Punch."

"Success is thus reaching the top rung of a given ladder," commented Blain. "There are many ladders: some of finance, others of law, medicine, politics, and still others of ice-cream cones and popped-corn. The trick in success is to pick out a suitable ladder and then climb, assiduously climb. I wonder who prepared the family-tree that was published in *The Daily Moon,*" he added thoughtfully.

"And I am wondering whether Larned just happened to be president of the Young Men's Liberal-Conservative Club on the year of an election," said Evans.

. . . . . .

The Big Man from Ottawa was satisfied with his days spent in East Badmington.

The machine had been rehabilitated and apparently was all the better for its temporary disconnection of parts. On the day of the election the vote came out of its devious corners in undiminished flow. Motor-cars speeded here and there to the polls, depositing a sympathetic electorate, the Dobbinites and McMichaelans contributing (although it must be confessed not quite whole-heartedly) to its numbers. The morning after the election, the Big Man smiled in reminiscent self-satisfaction when he came to the following item in the long list of returns:

William Larned (Lib.-Con.)	8,671
Albert Barnes (Lib.)	2,018
William Larned (elected), maj.	6,653

CHAPTER THE SECOND

A SERIOUS CRISIS AVERTED.

Lady Bateman approved of her husband's guest. Although a social recluse, Larned, as the result of an instinctive gentility and the careful training of a punctilious mother (assisted by the caustic reprimands of three sisters), was at his ease in the society of women.

"A quiet House this afternoon," remarked Sir Henry, cutting deeply into the joint.

"I thought it quite exciting," replied Larned.

Sir Henry looked at Mr. Larned, plainly puzzled, and probably half wondering if his guest were clumsily attempting to be humorous.

"Did you follow the member from Holstein closely, Sir Henry?"

"I think I caught the substance of what he had to say. He is not in accord with our oleomargarine measure."

"He is so completely out of accord that he is going to vote against the Government on the measure," answered Larned.

"I did not understand him to go that far," said the Prime Minister. "Rare or well done, Larned?"

"If I may choose, then let it be rare, Sir Henry. He will vote against us," continued Larned confidently. "It is of the Oleomargarine Bill I wished to speak to you. There are others beside our friend from Holstein who are dissatisfied."

"I fancy we shall bring them around," answered the Prime Minister easily.

"Pardon me, Sir Henry, but if a division be taken on the bill as it stands, we shall lose not less than twenty members."

"The devil, you say!" gasped Sir Henry, dropping the carver upon immaculate linen. "That's impossible. I have no such report from the whips."

"Possibly they are not informed, but there is no need to speculate about the matter; I have a list of the disaffected members in my pocket," was the unexpected answer of the Member for East Badmington. "It is at your service. Have them checked up. In my opinion the whips are ignorant of the situation; and, apparently, the rural members themselves do not realise how many, thinking to satisfy their butter-making electors, have determined to give what they believe to be one harmless vote against the Government."

"The devil, you say!" repeated Sir Henry. "Are you *sure*?" he asked incredulously.

"Perfectly."

"And why has this not been brought to my attention before?" asked the Prime Minister.

"I can speak only for myself. I hesitated about approaching you on the subject before, because, until the Member from Holstein spoke this afternoon, I might have been repeating idle gossip, rather than giving information. You see, I knew who was bell-wether; I knew the size of the flock; but not until this afternoon did I know that the wether with the bell was heading for the hole in the fence."

"We will have the debate adjourned when we return to the House, and make sure of our position before proceeding further."

"I had hoped you would do that," answered Larned.

"The press has given the measure support," suggested Lady Batemen, who was attentively following the conversation.

"The writers of editorials are consumers, not producers, of milk, Lady Bateman," replied the Member for East Badmington smilingly. "The press is sensitive to urban atmosphere, and is not a safe barometer of rural conditions." Turning to the Prime Minister, he continued: "May I suggest, Sir Henry, that a party caucus be called to discuss the subject?"

"Certainly, certainly," assured Sir Henry. "That will be necessary if we find things as you say."

"We have had only one caucus this session," continued Larned.

"Yes," commented Sir Henry drily.

Lady Bateman, observing the abruptness of her husband's answer, adroitly changed the subject of conversation by asking Larned if he had ever tasted oleomargarine.

"Not knowingly," he replied.

The hostess laughed gaily. "An apt reply to what I was about to say. By a curious coincidence, I made a little experiment of my own in oleomargarine this morning. We had no butter on the breakfast table—and Sir Henry did not complain," she added.

"I may have swallowed my complaints with the oleomargarine," said Sir Henry, good-naturedly joining in the amusement at his expense.

"Like most men, Henry, you are not a silent sufferer at the table," Lady Bateman retorted.

That evening upon her husband's return from Parliament, Lady Bateman enquired as to the progress of the oleomargarine debate.

"The situation is serious," replied Sir Henry wearily.

"You have it in hand, of course."

"An amendment is being prepared at Larned's suggestion. He is threshing it out with the disaffected members to-night, and before I left the House called me up to say that he expected them to accept it."

"Henry, I like Larned," said Lady Bateman.

. . . . . .

A few days later, Larned received an invitation to drink tea with Lady Bateman. "I want you to meet a few gossippy women," ran her note. Upon the invitation of his hostess, the Member for East Badmington lingered after the tea-drinkers had departed.

"To satisfy a woman's curiosity, tell me, Mr. Larned, "why you are so strongly against oleomargarine," she asked. Our Domestic Science Club is enthusiastically in its favour."

"And the Womens' Farm Institutes are as strongly against it," replied Larned. "It is an old story, as old as modern civilisation—the conflict between town and country."

"Surely the people of Badmington want oleomargarine!"

"Want it! I should say they do! Just now it is the topic of the hour, and if we are to believe our hysterical press, the cost-of-living problem will never be solved until we have oleomargarine. My own interest lies in supporting the bill in its present form. The bill is all in my favour. But—there is an election-day coming. It is almost in sight, and we ought not to face the polls with a diminished majority in the House, especially if that diminution be obtained through the desertion of country members."

"Your view appears good."

"I am looking through the spectacles of party politics."

"Naturally," she encouraged.

"We now have the city support," he continued. "It is not to be lost by continuing to prohibit the importation of oleomargarine. We need the support of the countryside, and it is not to be gained by that measure."

"Few members can see beyond the wants of their own constituencies," Lady Bateman told him. "It is really refreshing to hear a member supporting the general party interest at the sacrifice of his own local interest. But you

must be careful of your constituency," she cautioned, while the servant was bringing another pot of hot water.

"I shall not lose it on this question," he replied easily. "It is true Badmington wants oleomargarine, but it wants something even more—a party in power which will protect the productions of Badmington. My constituents might punish me for supporting free oleomargarine by nominating another candidate. It is possible, but not probable. Be that as it may, Badmington will not dare to punish the party by electing a man of an opposition which would deprive it of bounties upon which Badmington is growing fat."

"Henry, I am sure young Larned is deserving of being brought to the front," Lady Bateman told her husband that night.

For four years Larned had represented Badmington, and so far as the Chamber was concerned had represented it in silence. He had attended the sessions of Commons, but beyond asking a few questions, his voice had been unheard in the House. He had rarely attended the committees, and when the House was not in session had spent hours in perusing the debates of Commons. Huge volumes of Hansard were carried by unperspiring messengers to his room, while blue books littered his table. These storehouses of government lore which most public men ignore or sleep over, Larned sapped with industry. He had digested from Hansard, the wise and unwise utterances of Macdonald, Cartier, Brown, Mackenzie, Laurier, Borden, White, Graham, and other men who had made history in Canada. Constantly was he writing; and, if the truth be told, constantly preparing notes of speeches, and as constantly delivering them to the waste-paper basket—an altogether unusual proceeding for a Member of Parliament.

Badmington did not murmur at the silence of its member. Years of representation by Larned's predecessor had accustomed it to non-representation in the voice of Parliament. Badmington was satisfied. Larned an-

swered correspondence promptly and sympathetically. If the constituent had not received all that had been requested, the constituent laid away the last letter on the subject with the feeling that it was simply because to obtain was not within the power of the member.

Few had been the apparent claims of Larned to distinction. If the reader had asked about him from those who haunt the visitors' galleries and find their life in studying the members of the House and their performance (as "rail birds" follow the early morning exercise of runners and jumpers at the track), he would probably have been told: "Larned? Oh, he is the best-dressed man in the House." It might also have been said, "He is one of the youngest members of the House."

But all things political were changed for Larned, as if by magic, once he had secured the attention of the Prime Minister—and the confidence of Lady Bateman.

Having adroitly smoothed the way of the Government in the matter of oleomargarine, Larned was frequently called upon to act in other equally embarrassing matters, and moved forward along the political highway as if it had been oiled for the special purpose of speeding his progress.

His voice was now heard more frequently in Parliament, and his speeches were masterly in their logic and—much to his credit—masterly in their brevity. Devoting himself to politics, he found time for only those social activities that centred around Lady Bateman's drawing-room.

Larned was said by some to have cultivated Lady Bateman, and by others to have been cultivated by Lady Bateman.

Having a safe seat, he was in a position to devote himself during the campaign that preceded the next general election, to the assistance of country members less proficient in the art of speech-making. He worked unsparingly in their service, and soon established a platform reputation extending beyond the borders of his own Province. He

sought to persuade, rather than mislead or dazzle; he spoke as one convinced, and succeeded in convincing others. He possessed that quality rare and valuable in public-speaking—attunement to his audience; seldom did his points pass over its head; and rarely did they "miss fire". While always on familiar terms with his audience, he never trespassed upon its sense of dignity.

"Idiot!" he once muttered to himself, as a fellow-member from Badmington took off his coat while addressing a small-town audience on a hot night. And his judgment was good, for a round score left the meeting, swearing that the man from the city would not have spoken to a Badmington audience in his shirt-sleeves.

"A man is a fool who carries a satchel of allopathic remedies to a Christian Science meeting," Larned told an old friend who had congratulated him upon understanding the peculiar temper of a meeting. "There are people who want political allopathy, and there are those who prefer the sugar-coated pill of the homeopathist. Give the people what they want; that's my rule," he said.

Humour and satire he used, and was never known as either humourist or satirist. He delighted in joint debates, and frequently confused, and on more than one occasion routed his opponents by dragging from Hansard embarrassing statements made by opposition leaders in years gone by, invariably citing, to the delight, if not the edification, of his audience, the date and page of his quotations.

The time devoted to the waste-paper baskets had admirably fitted him for something more responsive.

The new Parliament to which Larned was elected by the old-time Badmington majority, saw him strong in prestige and (thanks to his unsparing devotion to the interests of Government candidates) in possession of that invaluable asset of the politician, "a personal following". When the gaps in the Cabinet were filled after the election, he found himself—and it was said at the time, upon Lady Bateman's suggestion—entrusted with the Portfolio of Public Works.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

AN OFFER AND AN ACCEPTANCE

AFTER several years of palatable administration, the Honourable William Larned was called to an Imperial Conference in London. It was his first visit to the United Kingdom, and yet there were few to discover it. Early in life he had learned that the services of a London draper are indispensable, and obtainable by accepting the offices of missionaries periodically sent to the Colonies. He had become outwardly fitted for metropolitan society; and a few purchases from the haberdasheries of the Strand completed what was necessary to make him indistinguishable from the better-class inhabitants of London Town.

It must be admitted Larned was fond of clothes. "If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing well," he once tritely remarked to a colleague who had reprimanded him for wasting time in turning over shirting materials. On the morning of a critical meeting of Council, the young Minister had been known to spend a good half-hour in adjusting his cravat; and a friend, repeating the incident, naively remarked, "No one even noticed that his tie was on straight."

Reporters, sent by the Metropolitan press to interview this King's representative from far-away Canada, found it difficult, in spite of long years of experience, to set him in the customary local colour of the Colonies. Strange it was that the Honourable Mr. Larned brought no photographs of himself to London; and stranger still obstin-

ately refused to accept the suggestion that they were necessary for the press.

A paragraph in an evening paper announcing the aversion of the Honourable Mr. Larned to photographs, brought forth in one of the popular weeklies an elaborate description of his appearance and mannerisms. The observant writer referred to the cut of his clothes as evidence of the growing intimacy between the Mother Country and the Overseas Dominion; and gravely observed that he preferred a slice of lemon, rather than sugar, in his tea.

The pictorial dailies, finding ready-made photographs unobtainable, vied with each other in reproducing snapshots of the Honourable Mr. Larned. London was given pictures of Mr. Larned in the Strand, Mr. Larned alighting from a motor-car in Downing Street, and Mr. Larned engaged in other pursuits all equally commonplace and respectable. The public, always a keen observer, found in these photographic reproductions not the slightest trace of posing on his part, and naturally concluded that he was an extraordinary colonial administrator.

At the conferences, Larned was short of speech and decisive in the expression of an opinion, invariably delivered towards the close of a subject's discussion. His after-dinner efforts were well-received and struck a deep patriotic note for Empire. Always was he courteous and everywhere an excellent listener. London, at least the London that thinks in terms of Empire, recognised in him a coming man. In short, London talked of Larned. Having lunched one day with Lord Steeleton at the *Carlton,* upon leaving the club he had overheard young Shropshire ask a companion, "Who is that johnny in whom Lord Steeleton seems to take so much interest?" "Can't you recognise him from the prints in the press?" was the reply. "That is Larned, a Colonial Minister. I'll lay you two to one that he is wearing a red rose within a fortnight."

Reflecting, Larned recalled that Steeleton had been unusually attentive. While speaking at the great Fishmongers' Banquet, Steeleton's cold grey eyes had been fixed upon him. For a moment he felt as a mouse must feel who, from a wire cage, gazes expectantly into the eyes of a terrier, and as the picture floated through his mind, he smiled contemptuously and, renewing his efforts, concluded amidst unusually hearty applause. Larned was invariably at his best under strain.

The Member for East Badmington became convinced that, for some unknown reason, he was under surveillance. "What can Steeleton want with me?" he asked himself upon retiring that evening, and the following morning, quite as a matter of course, received an invitation to lunch with Lord Steeleton at his house in Portman Square.

The afternoon had worn away. The sun had ceased struggling to penetrate the grey mist of a London fog. The voices of the two men were heard in the cold, gloomy, unlighted library. A domestic had gone to turn on the lights, and had retired upon finding the door locked.

"I have reviewed the dangers which confront the Empire; I have attempted to place before you the different plans by which they may be avoided, and have told you frankly the part which we hope you will take in connection with these matters," Steeleton had said.

The Minister from Canada sat as if in deep thought, and did not answer.

"You have a wonderful opportunity for service," urged the older man.

"I would not, for the world, disturb Sir Henry Bateman," replied Larned. "He has been Prime Minister for many years. He is my leader. What I have in politics, I owe to him."

"You may depend upon it that provision will be made for Sir Henry."

"I can't conceive of anything that would be acceptable."

"Never fear. Sir Henry will be cared for."

"Do you think—Lady Bateman—will be—satisfied with the arrangement?" asked Larned slowly.

"Lady Bateman will not be unwilling to live in London. She would rather have her husband in the House of Lords, than Prime Minister of Canada. But, above all, a change is imperative. Sir Henry is not strong enough to deal with this strenuous matter. We need a man of iron, and you are that man."

The younger man's body did not stir, and if his face showed emotion, its trace was concealed in the gloom. Steeleton forced himself to go on:

"We are confiding in you and expect you to have confidence in us. You have unmistakably declared your support of Empire. You believe in its future, and I assure you that we in the heart of the Empire believe that future dependent upon the acceptance of some form of federation. We cannot hope to obtain all we desire now. The plan which I have just outlined is regarded as the best, at least for a commencement. After a time, we will go further. Eventually there will be established a more solid structure. In the meantime, each nation within the Empire will, on the one hand, preserve its autonomy and, on the other, maintain an effective co-operation."

The Englishman paused, obviously awaiting an expression of opinion from his guest, but obtaining none, continued:

"We have progressed further towards securing public favour for our scheme than probably you have thought. We have our movements everywhere. The artisans of South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, are organised, as are the 'intellectuals'. We have business men's organisations, and in fact organisations to suit each class of society. For years our organisation has been in the making. Few there are who know its ramifications. I frankly confess I do not know them. I have my chief, and upon his authority offer you our support."

Again did Lord Steeleton give Larned an opportunity of expressing his views and again, as had happened so many times that afternoon, without success.

"If your party needs finance," he continued, "accept my assurance it will be liberally provided. We are in funds. We recognise that politics cannot be conducted without finance. As a practical politician, I presume it is unnecessary to remind you of the fact," and the Englishman's voice contained the slight indication of a smile. "I assume you do not want to be cognisant of the details of that phase of the business."

"I have taken only a partial interest in the finances of our party organisation," was the reply.

"If you do not accept my proposal, I rely upon your given word of honour, to preserve my confidence under all provocations," said Lord Steeleton cautiously. "But I cannot see how you can refuse," he added persuasively. "I assure you that your hesitancy is quite incomprehensible. The Empire needs federation," he repeated.

"I was not thinking of that," confessed Larned, "but rather of its practicability in Canada. I am afraid you do not understand the sentiment of my country."

"We ought to understand it. Heaven knows we have spent enough money for reports upon it. For years our agents have travelled Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific. For some time, federation has been the subject of discussion in Canada."

"The man on the street has no opinion on the subject."

"All the better. A short campaign is more likely to be decided in favour of the party with the better organisation, and I take it those who are likely to be our opponents are as yet unorganised."

"That is a safe presumption," volunteered Larned.

"Public sentiment is largely a matter of newspapers."

"Of that I was thinking," said the Canadian.

"That will be provided for," assured the Englishman.

Albion College Library

From Larned's throat there came a sound which cannot be converted into words. Lord Steeleton apparently interpreted it as an expression of doubt.

"Can you not see with your own eyes," he asked, "what has been done in the United Kingdom? The press is all but unanimously within our control. There are, it is true, a few recreants, but our voice is strong enough to cry them down. We have not made so much progress with the press of Canada; but we have support there, substantial support, and, more important still, we have plans to that end which will be carried out when necessary. We realise, as you do, certain newspapers in Canada have to be brought to our support."

"Our newspapers are not to be bought."

"Not all of them."

"Few of them. The owners of our larger dailies are as rich as Croesus," answered Larned.

"In politics there are other means of exchange than money," he was told by the astute Englishman.

"True," assented Larned.

"We are informed by our correspondents that beyond French-Canada there is no considerable body of sentiment against Federation. The well-informed correspondent of *The Times* is of the same opinion. French-Canadians *en masse* alone block the way. I presume that, to one of your experience, it is needless to suggest the obvious."

"Yes, said Larned indefinitely.

"*Quebec has to be isolated,*" said Lord Steeleton deliberately.

Larned did not answer, and for some moments there was complete silence. The Englishman appeared determined to have the Canadian's opinion on the subject before proceeding further: "That would appear practicable?" he asked.

"It is practicable; but is it desirable?"

"I will confess that I would have preferred to bring Quebec to our way of thinking; but that appears to be

impossible, and the smaller interest must be sacrificed for the greater. There are many things in politics which are unpleasant."

"True."

"You had better make up your mind," urged Lord Steeleton more cheerfully. "Remember, as I have told you, I must have a definite answer, an acceptance or a rejection, this afternoon. And, by the way, it is dark. The day is gone," and Steeleton, arising, turned on the lights.

Larned walked to a window and gazed out into the mist-filled street, and then turning to Steeleton, he asked: "Are you certain that Sir Henry Bateman is willing to come to London?"

"Yes."

"Then you may have my answer," replied Larned deliberately. "I shall be pleased to have your support and will give you mine in return."

"Good!" replied the other, evidently relieved. "I congratulate you upon your decision."

"And I am not unappreciative of the good opinion you have of my capacity," said Larned smilingly. "I hope you have not rated me too highly."

"My associates are satisfied on that score—as am I," said Steeleton politely. "When do you expect to return to Canada?"

"My passage is booked on the *Leviathic,* sailing Tuesday next."

"Good!" commented Steeleton. "I am glad you are returning to Canada immediately, for we have reason to expect a critical situation there soon. We have trusted agents who will constantly advise with you, and their words will be mine. I have here"—and Larned's host took from his waistcoat pocket a small box—"a signet ring which I ask you to keep. Examine it carefully. A similar ring will seal all official communications, and no message will be authentic unless borne by a messenger with a ring identical in every respect."

Larned took the ring from the box, examined it curiously, and then, replacing it, put the box in his waistcoat pocket.

"Incidentally, each messenger will wear a red rose," continued his host. "It is a pleasing conceit which our group has assumed, and found not unuseful," he said, smilingly pointing to the red rose which he was wearing on the lapel of his coat.

Shortly afterwards Larned took his departure and as he descended the steps of the Steeleton house, he thought to himself: "Shropshire's friend was a man of rare discernment."

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

KIDNAPPED

"Billy Larned, by all that is exciting!"

The voice rang clear and fresh, as the Minister reached the pavement. Larned groped his way in astonishment through the thick fog to a huge touring-car which was panting heavily beside the curb. A first glance, by the aid of a flickering street light, revealed tire-trouble in the hands of a deftly-working chauffeur; and a second—Allan Mowbray, a friend of Canadian university days.

"You are a gift from the gods," cried Mowbray, "and in these days the gods are stingy. We have a little place down in Surrey, and shall have it for only a few weeks longer. We are only three, my wife, her sister, and myself. You simply have to come with us for the week-end," and Mowbray, grasping Larned's hand, brought him to the motor, and introduced him to two ladies, who were wrapped in rugs.

"Marie, my wife, Larned; this is Billy Larned, of whom you have often heard me speak. Polly, this is Billy Larned, whose college escapades form the sweetest reminiscences of my declining years."

"We shall be delighted to have you," said Mrs. Mowbray.

"I am afraid it is impossible," said Larned. "I am leaving for home almost immediately, and besides"—in a moment of weakness—he added, "I am not prepared."

"Clothes be hanged," remonstrated Mowbray, anticipating Larned's objection. "When we lived together in the fraternity house, I frequently swiped yours, and you were not above taking mine. Our figures have changed since then—but we have changed together, Billy," said Mowbray, and, standing back, he critically inspected his friend. "Probably a little stouter than is consistent with the best lines, but still graceful. No beastly rotundity, thank Heaven!"

Larned was amused at his friend's description. "I am sorry—" he began.

"Clothes, Larned!" continued Mowbray. "I have done nothing but buy clothes since I came to England. If it were brains you had to borrow! Ah, then you would have had an excuse. You must not say 'No'," he added, fairly pushing Larned into the car.

"You will have to take me to my hotel first."

"Hotel be hanged," replied Mowbray.

Larned felt as a man does in half-sleep, wondering if he were in or out of a dream. Polly—and as yet Larned knew her by no other name—stirred slightly in the seat as if to make room. By one of those unaccountable impulses which grave psychologists have seldom bothered about explaining (although they are constantly upsetting the lives of men and nations), Larned stepped into the car.

"If I must, I must," he laughed. "Tell your man to stop at the nearest telegraph station."

"Good old Billy!" exclaimed Mowbray, with evident gratification. "What are you doing in London? One of those conferences that are blooming under the guidance of the Wise Men from the East—and the West—I'll be bound. We've seen your pictures in the papers. You're becoming quite a lion, but lions do not come from our side of the water, do they? I hope you've not become a bear."

Larned laughed heartily. "Think of a tamed animal, one that is stuffed with food willy-nilly, night after

night, and you will have me classified," he advised. "These conferences are one long serial dinner."

"Marie, I'm going in for politics," announced Mowbray.

"Don't," advised Larned. "Probably your digestion is perfect, and I should worry about mine if I were not leaving for home next week."

"Larned was my senior at college, Polly," said Mowbray, turning to his sister-in-law; "and a jolly good sort he was, in spite of being top-shelf at books. For Heaven's sake, Higgins, get this car moving," he called to his chauffeur.

"Everything ready, sir."

"Drive on, then, and pick up the first telegraph office."

The telegraph-station was found within the course of a few streets and Larned from it despatched a message informing his secretary that he had decided to visit friends in the country over the week-end, and asked not to be disturbed except by matters of gravest importance.

"Lobby him, my dear, lobby Larned in the name of the dear, old, suffering public," continued Mowbray, as Larned, returning from the message, pulled up a rug and settled down to enjoy his drive. "We must have Lake Mississquoi cleared of stumps, and who should have it done but the Minister of Public Works. Yachting is positively unsafe until the channels are cleared. Forget not, Marie, this is the day of women's influence in public affairs."

"We shall be pleased to welcome Mr. Larned to Mississquoi House when we return, and he may for himself see our necessities." There was something in Mrs. Mowbray's voice that sounded strange, a something in her accent that bespoke an alien nationality.

"Whom had Mowbray married?" That was the thought that ran through Larned's mind. Alas! Politics had deprived him of all but official social life. He had had no time for his friends and their marriages. A man well on in his thirties who had not found time to select a wife

of his own, naturally had had little time in which to become interested in other people's wives. The reader may think this conclusion open to criticism, but the reader ought to remember that few have devoted themselves, as had Larned, so entirely to success in other directions.

"I *am* glad to see you again, Billy," said Mowbray impulsively. "It was only the other day that I was thinking of the times we had had together at college. I must be getting old, for more and more my mind goes back to Varsity days."

"Is that an indication of approaching age?" asked Larned.

"Sure thing," answered Mowbray. "How much has happened since we were at Varsity!" he continued. "The good old days of Varsity. Do you remember the strenuous elections we fought in the Literary Society?"

"And invariably lost," added Larned.

"We won once," said Mowbray.

"By brute force," suggested the Minister. "A very indefensible practice, I fear."

"Not as bad as those of to-day in the more grown-up arena of politics, if we may believe half of what we hear," answered Mowbray. "And personally I prefer brute force to stealth."

"Come, come," reproved Larned.

"I didn't know you had taken such an interest in essays and debates when at college, Allan," said Mrs. Mowbray.

"I am afraid Allan's interest was centred in the physical features of the annual elections," volunteered Larned.

"The good old days," sighed Mowbray, "when brute force was a legitimate and recognised factor in elections. And the bawling calf that we dragged and pushed and carried up into the tower! You were in on that, weren't you, Billy?"

"I have to confess my guilt," answered the Minister. "We were very energetic then."

"They were good days—rare days—Varsity days," answered Mowbray enthusiastically. "Let us wake up staid London with its yell. Come on, Larned." And Larned, catching the contagion for a moment, found himself joining in "the yell", and thinking of Hallowe'en nights, of football games, and of all the sweet memories of college days, as the motor car threaded its way through the streets of Suburban London. It was only for a moment; and, restraining himself, Larned remembered his interview with Lord Steeleton. He, Larned, was to be Prime Minister of all Canada. What would Mowbray and Mrs. Mowbray and the bundle of rugs by his side which Mowbray had called Polly, think if they knew. But it was only for a moment. Mowbray rattled on in memory of Varsity, and gradually the impression of Steeleton and Imperialism and High Politics and Solidity, fading, vanished from the mind of the distinguished statesman who represented East Badmington in the Canadian House of Commons.

"There's the moon!" shouted Mowbray. "The fog is lifted. There are fields and cows and sheep. We are out of it all. We are far away from the man-made city; we are out in the God-given country. We are away from artifices. We can no longer hear the machinery that is creakingly regulating man's relation to man, and may some day crunch us all into good-for-nothing homogeneity. Let us breathe," he said in the solemn voice of a parson summoning the congregation to prayer.

"That was refreshing," said Mowbray, having followed deeply his own injunction.

The Honourable William Larned was now giving little attention to the remarks of his friend of school days. He was, if the truth be told, worn out and allowing himself the pleasure of dreaming nothings.

The bundle by his side stirred as one of the rugs slipped to the floor of the car.

"Pardon my neglect," said Larned, replacing the fallen wrap and feeling a strange satisfaction in the reward of

a smile from what a closer inspection revealed to be an exceedingly pretty woman.

"Whom had Mowbray married? Larned strove to remember, and succeeded in recalling only that there was something out of the ordinary in the marriage. Who was Mrs. Mowbray, and who was this young woman whom the informal Mowbray had introduced as Polly? Why was she called Polly? Her sister had been named Marie, and surely Polly was a nickname for Marie as well as for Mary," so thought the Honourable Mr. Larned. He vaguely felt that there was a something he should remember about the two sisters and vainly strove to remember. He was conscious of a keen interest in the subject, and particularly that part of it which related to his companion in the rear seat of the Mowbray car as it silently sped its way homewards. Admittedly a hasty interest for a man who had impressed great London with his ability; but I would have the reader bear in mind that man's interest in woman (and woman's interest in man) since the days of Time, has refused to yield to the laws of logic. Further would I urge the reader to remember that Larned had devoted that afternoon to considering grave matters and was now suffering the relapse of a man who, keyed to the highest pitch like a top, is whirled into sleep when the spring is released.

Mowbray was still talking and Larned, unheeding, found in the virility of his friend's voice a soothing balm.

"England is becoming a country of smoke-stacks and mines," he said. "It is the things beneath and above the ground in which she finds outlet for her energy. And such soils! What a shame the days of the squires are gone by. What a pity that their homes and estates are being 'let' to strangers, like us, who can have at the best only a vacationist's enthusiasm for them. But if Englishmen will not enjoy the beauties of their own countryside, we may as well take that which they have deserted, even if we are to handle it only for the passing moment. What

say you, Mr. Wise Man from the East, if you come by the long route?"

The question brought no answer.

"Are you asleep?" asked Mowbray in gentler tones.

"No, I am dreaming."

"You are tired," said Mowbray gently. "We are almost at the end of our journey. Three more turns to the left and one to the right, and we shall be in the prettiest little spot in Surrey. I almost said 'the world'. Ah, no, not the world, for there is our own place on Lake Mississquoi. It is not so man-made. But, after all, Nature has done better work than man in landscapes. Ah, that is the difference, the difference between Canada and England." And Mowbray broke forth in song, and this is the song he sang as the motor travelled its way through the darkness of Surrey roads:

"Comme let dit un vieil adage,
Rien n'est si beau que son pays!
Et de le chanter, c'est l'usage,
Le mien je chante à mes amis,
Le mien je chante à mes amis.
L'étranger voit avec un oeil d'envie,
Du St. Laurent le majestueux cours;
A son aspect le Canadien s'écrie:
O Canada, mon pays, mes amours!
O Canada, mon pays, mes amours!

"Maints ruisseaux et maintes rivières
Arrosent nos fertiles champs;
Et de nos montagnes altières,
De loin on voit les longs penchants,
De loin on voit les longs penchants.
Vallons, coteaux, forêts, chutes, rapides,
De tant d'objets est-il plus beau concours?
Qui n'aimerait tes lacs aux eaux limpides?
O Canada, mon pays! mes amours!
O Canada, mon pays! mes amours!"

The sisters joined in the refrain, and Larned found pleasure in the sound of their voices and responded to the evident emotion they felt. He had heard the Quebec members sing the same words on the floor of the Chamber while the bells were ringing for division; but then it had

not breathed the spirit of home, of *his* home, as it did that night in the heart of England. He could see in far-off Canada the thick dark pines, could hear the murmurs of running waters and could even feel in the air a crispness that was not of England.

A voice from the bundle of rugs by his side, took up the next verse and in clear, sweet tones, barely audible, as if singing to itself, sang

"Les quatre saisons de l'année
Offrent tour à tour leurs attraits.
Le printemps, l'amante enjouée
Revoit ses fleurs, ses verts bosquets,
Revoit ses fleurs, ses verts bosquets.
Le moissonneur, l'été, joyeux s'apprête
A recueillir le fruit de ses labours.
Et tout l'automne et tout l'hiver, on fête.
O Canada; mon pays! mes amours!
O Canada; mon pays! mes amours!"

This time Mowbray and Mrs. Mowbray joined in the refrain. When they had finished, Larned felt that he should have expressed his pleasure; but, instead of paying the usual compliments, he sat silently thinking of that which they sang, and dimly wondering why the patriotism of English-Canadians had not revealed itself in songs descriptive of Canada.

Again the bundle of rugs by his side stirred.

"Are you cold?" asked Larned, and for some unaccountable reason, felt concerned in the answer.

"No, thank you," answered a soft voice.

And Larned re-arranged the rugs.

"England is made," Mowbray was saying. "It is complete. I should like to have lived here when it was in the building. But not now. One cannot live by seeing; one must, of necessity, be doing. What say you, my wife?"

"I hope, Allan, you will retain your enthusiasm for doing things after we have returned home," answered Mrs. Mowbray.

"Well, perhaps I ought to have been more explicit," he confessed. "I should have said the pleasure of life is in seeing things done, rather than in seeing them when they are done. These English country-homes charm me and sadden me. I cannot enjoy them for wondering who planned them, who built them, and who it was looked forward to the days of their enjoyment. I wonder why they are deserted."

"I suppose the taxes are heavy," said Mrs. Mowbray vaguely.

"That's it," cried Mowbray. "The burden of Empire! Once Englishmen lived the ideal life, the quiet life of the country. They breathed the fresh air and knew the exhilarating smell of the soil. Then came temptation: Conquest—Possessions—Power. And now Englishmen can no longer live on the land. They must needs sweat in factory and mine, to pay the interest on their greatness. Ah! there is the sign of the *Blue Dragon!*" he shouted, peering out of the car at a roadway inn. "One more turn to the left, one to the right, and we are at Surrey Court," he added.

. . . . . .

Upon reaching bed, the events of the day passed before Larned as in a moving-picture. He saw the outline of Lord Steeleton's figure as if in a mist and heard him gravely say, "It is a splendid chance I offer." He saw himself at the right hand of the Speaker, leading the House; he heard the applause from the back benches, and raising his hand, found the fingers covered with signet rings—all of identical and curious pattern. But only for a moment. Then he saw a bundle of rugs in a motor-car, and the bundle gradually changing into a beautiful red rose, sang in sweet harmony of a land far away. Over his senses there crept a delicious intoxication of happiness; then the rose became indistinct, the voice inaudible —and Larned's vision was lost in slumber.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH

IN WHICH MR. CLUCKSTON RETURNS FROM THE COLONIES

"How did our young friend from Canada take the honours which were thrust upon him?"

"I don't know."

"He accepted?"

"Yes," said Lord Steeleton hesitatingly; "he accepted—but it was not the sort of acceptance I had anticipated."

"What is wrong?" asked the other. "Tell me. We can't afford to make a mistake."

The speakers were conversing over a dinner-table, while the dinnerless Larned was being driven by the Mowbrays through the suburbs of London and on to their place in Surrey. Lord Steeleton's host was under, rather than over, the average size of man, clean shaven, with keen, penetrating eyes and sharp features. He was neither young nor old in appearance; strangers who now and then hazarded an opinion upon his age had been known to guess as low as forty and as high as seventy, and then remained unsatisfied. Benjamin Body had never confessed his age, not even to the editor of *Who's Who*. Many are the speculations as to Mr. Body; the known facts may be recorded in few words. He is of the new school of Englishmen, which, in reality, is super-American. Had he lived in Cleveland, U.S.A., Benjamin Body would have been known as "a live-wire"; living in London, he was known as plain B., sometimes B. B., and

at other times as "Bizzy." Englishmen are more terse in their nomenclature than Americans. By the simple expedient of pronouncing the word "bizzy", the reader may from its sizzling sound discover for himself that it is a synonym for "live-wire".

On the table at Mr. Body's right hand, there rested a telephone instrument and from an adjoining room came the clickety-click of telegraph instruments, and the monotonous tapping of typewriting machines. I would have the reader remember these details, for looking upon this unpretentious room and its plainly-spread table, the reader is looking at the seat of the heart that strives to beat within the New Empire.

The telephone bell rang. Benjamin Body answered.

"Yes, ah. . . .glad you are back, Cluckston. . . .glad you did. . . .yes, come on."

"Cluckston is home—from Canada," he said, hanging up the receiver. "I think you will be interested in hearing of the progress of the Society for the Promotion of Anglo-Saxon Unity. A wonderful work. At last we are going to bring all Anglo-Saxons together. We shall have them celebrating the same holidays, breathing the same aspirations and working toward the same ideals."

"Who are the Anglo-Saxons?" asked the other dubiously.

"Now don't begin cheese-paring, Steeleton," expostulated his host.

"The scheme doesn't seem consistent with Imperial Federation," protested Steeleton.

"That's because you don't understand it," said Body. "Some day I'll tell you all about it. But let us return to the affairs of the Minister from Canada."

"I must confess I was disappointed," continued Steeleton, "and more than once during the interview thought of retreating if I could find an opening for retreat. But that course had its obvious dangers, since I was committed before I had sensed danger."

"What did Larned say that disturbed you?"

"That's the trouble. It was not what he said, but what he didn't say."

"And there is obvious difficulty in reporting what a man didn't say," suggested the other quizzically.

"Not on this occasion," was the answer. "Larned didn't say that the Empire needed federating."

"Didn't even say 'Amen' when you said it did?"

"That's it," replied Steeleton. "You have diagnosed the trouble."

"Were there any objections offered?"

"None except a protest against disturbing Sir Henry Bateman, and he appeared to be easily satisfied on that score."

"Was he not attracted by the idea of becoming Prime Minister?" asked Body. "Did he doubt our ability to deliver the goods?"

The reader may find it difficult to believe that a man of Benjamin Body's speech was born within the British Isles, and yet such is the all but general contention. Certainly mere arrangement of words is no longer an infallible test of nativity. The new school of England is accepting more than the business methods of the Americans of the United States; some day we may find English people speaking the American language.

"No," replied Steeleton, answering both of Body's questions at once. "He appeared to accept his own ability and ours as matters of course."

"And what do you think was the motive behind his hesitancy?"

"I have been trying to analyse his motive. He is essentially practical, this young man. Yes, our correspondents in Canada were right," concluded Lord Steeleton, "in reporting Larned to be a practical politician. He had his ear to the ground; and, if I am not mistaken, had his ear to Canadian ground while I was talking of Empire. I feel

confident he was feeling his way to some local, rather than Imperial, advantage."

"So much the better," replied the other, apparently greatly relieved. "That is exactly what we want. Once Federation has been accomplished, we'll take care of the rest."

"Possibly. But it is not going to be an easy matter handling a half-dozen Larneds from different parts of the Overseas Dominions, all thinking of success in different terms."

"Of course, it is not going to be easy. If it were, neither you nor I would bother about it. If I am not mistaken, our man has the right idea. It is the game which is attracting him. He is playing his game, and we are playing ours. If he is wrapped up in his, he will less likely want to become wrapped in ours. But in the meantime we must get a line on what he has in mind. Scribbs," called Body, as a tired-looking young clerk answered the buzzer, "take a cable message."

Scribbs pushed a few dishes aside, looking longingly at a decanter of Scotch whiskey on the table, and wrote at his employer's dictation:

"'*Caleb, Ottawa, Canada*: *What is strongest card of Opposition?*'

And while here," he continued, "take this also:

'*Himalaya, Bombay, India*: *Boy or girl.*'

"And Scribbs, code these messages, and use our new book. I am afraid that copy of our old code which went down in *The Gothic,* may be floating about. It is dangerous to use it."

"Very well, sir."

Benjamin Body was a remarkable man, and if the reader has not already discovered the fact, I would have the evidence considered. Sometimes a little detail goes a long way in delineating character. "He smokes a meerschaum," said a friend to me of a man whom he wished to describe, and, of course, I knew at least several things

about him: past forty, fond of Oliver Goldsmith, devoted to chess, and accepting the Athenasian creed without a quiver. Perhaps when the reader learns that Benjamin Body imports a special brand of Pittsburg stogies from Bethlehem, Pa., and stores them in a glass humidor, he (but not she) may understand something of this marvellous creation of the Newest England.

But perhaps I do not make myself, or rather Body, plain. The stogies are accepted by many as a mark of the eccentricity of genius, when they are accepted, for many of his guests, forgetting to supply themselves with cigars, stealthily borrow tuppenny smokes from Scribbs. The true explanation of the stogies lies in that they are "the last word in efficiency", as Body once confided to a friend. "Often I have as many as thirty callers in my eighteen hours of working day," said he. "With Havanas, the thing is impossible, but with stogies" (and he blew a gust of smoke), "all things are possible." The friend shortly afterwards, upon thinking of the incident, took his departure.

"Yes, Steeleton, we play a game," said Body, taking up the thread of the argument after Scribbs had vanished with the messages for Overseas. "We may not admit it to ourselves," he continued, "at least not frequently, but it is the most difficult game this old world has ever known —and the biggest. The interests of four hundred millions of men and women to be centralised in few hands, and those few—*ours!* Think of it—*ours!* Federation means centralisation, and centralisation means one end to which all strings lead. We shall soon be pulling the strings. What more delightful occupation?"

Steeleton scrutinised the face of his companion. "Is that your motive?" he asked coldly.

"Course not," said Body, laughing at Steeleton's perturbation. "The different parts of the Empire must be brought together, or be allowed to drift apart. That is fundamental. But you and I are bringing them tighter

together, rather than allowing others to do it, because we take to that sort of thing."

"I think I understand," answered Steeleton, after a pause. "Perhaps you are right. I have been so busy trying to solve the motives of others that I have not solved my own."

"We are both working for the good of Empire, and our work shall live as long as the Empire lives; and, thanks to us, the Empire shall live through all eternity. And yet it is a game we play, and sometimes not a clean game," commented the candid Body.

Steeleton again looked at his companion doubtfully.

"You have yourself recommended titles, a full baker's dozen, and all for men whom you believed to be required in support of Imperial Federation," said Body, in answer to his companion's challenging scrutiny.

"I have recommended none but the most respectable," protested Steeleton hotly.

"Some of them awfully middle-class."

Steeleton gasped. His own title was of comparatively recent date and had come in for smart criticism. "Wh—what, may I ask," he stammered, "do you call upper-class?"

"A man's class is not to be determined by a label," answered the other smilingly. "And those who seek labels, by the seeking confess the need."

"There is much to be said for the judicious granting of titles," protested Steeleton.

"Of course, there is," replied Body good-naturedly. "It adds to the picturesqueness of the country, and something of the sort is needed in this bill-boarded age. They tell me a list of the guests at a church fête in Canada, reminds one of the *dramatis personae* of Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost.*"

"I fear I have forgotten it," said Steeleton, quite seriously.

The cynical Body laughed. "So have I," he confessed. "But I remember there is a curate, a school-master, and a long string of ladies and lords."

"Now that you remind me, was there not also a clown and a country wench?"

"Probably. Someone is always overlooked," advised the cynic.

Scribbs now interrupted the conversation, which might otherwise have been of greater interest to the reader, by announcing the arrival of Mr. Cluckston.

"Glad to see you back," greeted Body heartily.

Lord Steeleton also extended a welcome to the traveller, a middle-aged Englishman in checked tweeds.

"What news from beyond the seas? How goes the Anglo-Saxon union?" asked Body.

Cluckston coughed in the smoke-laden room and, pulling from his waistcoat-pocket a small note-book, immediately entered upon a businesslike narration of the results of his mission.

"Of the two thousand names supplied by the office, eighteen hundred and seventy-three have filed applications for membership. One hundred and twenty-seven were dead."

"Good! One hundred per cent. efficiency! The project was enthusiastically received. Excellent, Cluckston, excellent."

"There were protests against raising the fees."

"Raising fees?" enquired his employer in surprise.

"Yes. The applicants were already members of one or more Imperial associations and many of them suggested that expenses should be reduced—and consequently fees —by an amalgamation, or a merger as they call it over there."

"Humph! Worth considering," said Body, scribbling a note upon a pad of paper. "Anything else?"

"Yes, sir. I worked very hard and called on a thousand men in Badmington, whose names I took at random from the telephone book. I wanted to bring back for your information the average opinion of the country."

"Excellent idea, Cluckston! You will rise in the service. And with what success?"

"Rather unsuccessful," answered the agent mournfully; "in fact, I assure you, decidedly mediocre. The results are set down in my report. Would you like me to give a brief digest of the objections?"

"I am interested."

Cluckston referred to his neatly-kept note-book. "There were nine hundred and one objections," he said, "on the ground that the society would be useless, and that the harmony between English-speaking men should be allowed to proceed naturally, rather than through organisation. Some urged that hot-house plants lack virility."

"Nonsense!" said his chief emphatically.

"Exactly what I said. But you should have heard the objections to having all English-speaking people unite in the celebration of common public holidays. I am afraid the colonies won't take it on," said Cluckston sadly.

"Hum," replied Body. "What's the matter?"

"There were four hundred and thirty-one who objected to celebrating Shakespeare's birthday, a number maintaining that already too much money was being expended on fire-crackers, while others said they would prefer to celebrate Burn's birthday, and still others that of Bernard Shaw. You have no conception, sir, what a conflict there is over literature in the Colonies."

"Absurd."

"Exactly what I said!" replied Cluckston. "All were in agreement," he continued, "as to celebrating the 24th. of May."

"Good."

"But all maintained that it ought to belong not to the English-speaking people alone, but also to those who speak

French, Dutch, Spanish, and in fact the scores of languages of the British Empire. It was asserted that the 24th. of May used to be Queen Victoria's birthday, and that, as the Queen in her lifetime made no distinction between her subjects on the ground of language, the subjects of the Crown ought not now to create a distinction in honouring her memory."

"A quibble of words."

"Exactly what I told them," responded Cluckston.

"And Independence Day? How did the Canadians view it?"

"Well, when it came to the 4th. of July, I rather ran amuck," replied Cluckston dolefully. "Many upon whom I called, assuring me of their highest respect for the Americans, said in words which were not always unprofane that they could not with good heart be hilarious on the anniversary of the day when their ancestors were driven penniless into the wilderness. One man, upon whom I called, was exceedingly rude and called me a meddlesome fool; while quite a few assured me that when they celebrated the 4th. of July, it would be under the Stars-and-Stripes as citizens of a greater United States."

"What a re-mark-able point of view!" said Body, pausing between syllables.

"Isn't it?" agreed Cluckston. "Re-mark-able. You may be sure I said so. If I remember correctly, I used the phrase 'weird beyond comprehension'—rather good, I thought."

"Rather," commented Steeleton.

"You know one has to go to America to understand America," explained Cluckston. "It looks very simple at home to organize something or another among English-speaking men abroad, but it looks rather different away from home."

"I know," assented Body.

"An Englishman who had lived for a while in the United States," continued Cluckston, "protested against

describing the predominant language of North America as English. He reminded me that Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, in 'Foe-Farrel', has one of his heroes willing to sell his soul for the sound of an English voice in New York—even that of his worst enemy."

"He was probably a little Englander at home," remarked Body contemptuously.

"I suspected him," replied Mr. Cluckston. "But English in America is a bit foreign," he confessed.

Body passed his hand over his forehead and ringing for Scribbs, asked for the official list of the society's celebration days.

"Oh, yes! I knew there was another day," he said, looking rapidly over the list. "There is so much to remember. What about Thanksgiving?"

"Well, here again there were objections," replied Cluckston. "Many said that at present Canadians, irrespective of tongue, were rendering their concentrated thanks to God and to *le bon Dieu* on the same day, and seemed to think that an English-speaking Thanksgiving might be a subtle move towards two Thanksgiving Days in the year. It was even suggested that our programme might be a plot of cold-storage men to raise the price of turkeys."

"Ah, that is serious."

"Rather."

"Most serious," said Body, writing rapidly upon a pad of paper.

"It appears that several of the subscribers to our society are purveyors of poultry in a large way, and that intensified the suspicion against us," explained the punctilious agent.

"We must look carefully into the matter," commented his employer. "I shall await your final report with interest."

Cluckston coughed and, rising from his seat, hesitatingly passed towards the door. "My report," he said, "will

be completed so soon as the plates are ready for the charts in the appendix; but, in the meantime, may I have a two or three days' furlough?"

"Certainly," answered Cluckston's generous employer. "On domestic grounds, I presume?"

"Well, no, sir, not quite. They have prohibition in Canada," and Cluckston looked longingly at the decanter of Scotch. "I really feel the need of relaxation."

"Quite so, Cluckston. I had forgotten. Scribbs," said Body, having again brought that functionary to his side, "Mr. Cluckston will not report for a fortnight."

"Thank you," said the grateful Cluckston.

"Now, what were we talking about?" asked Body, turning to Steeleton as Cluckston and Scribbs withdrew. "Oh, yes—Larned."

"I am not at all satisfied with the situation," resumed Steeleton. "There is, I fear, a something which has escaped the eyes of our agents. There are difficulties."

"Of course, there are, or we would not be playing the game," said Body, reaching for a stogie.

Shortly afterwards Steeleton, remembering another engagement, departed.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH

A YOUTHFUL ESCAPADE RECALLED

WHEN Larned arose in the morning he smiled at the variety of shirts, cravats, trousers, waistcoats, and clothes generally, laid out for his acceptance. Without continuing into detail, it may be sufficient to remark that there was nothing lacking that belongs to a gentleman's toilet and wardrobe. "The irrepressible and thoughtful Mowbray," he said to himself; and for a full hour found genuine pleasure in dressing. A servant who was laying a fire in the hall-way grate, directed him to the breakfast-room, where he found his host standing critically before the side-table.

"Chops, yes, always chops!" Mowbray was saying. "Every morning I swear I'll take something else, and every morning end by taking chops. England may be decadent for all I know; but, oh! that we had her chops in Canada! Larned, after the strawberries, take chops. Do you know," he continued, "I believe it was the memory of the chops I had five years ago when Marie and I were honeymooning in England, that called me back again."

"Then it isn't true that love destroys the appetite?"

"It didn't affect mine," grimly remarked Mowbray; "nor, for that matter, Marie's."

"I presume the drive from town was too much for Mrs. Mowbray and her sister?" politely suggested Larned, following his host's advice in the matter of breakfast.

"Bring the toast, Reynolds. The ladies, Lord bless you, Larned, drove away to mass an hour ago! Haven't you

remembered that it's Sunday? But then you politicians easily overlook such mundane things as days."

"Went to mass," thought Larned. "Whom had Allan Mowbray married?—and who is her sister?" he asked himself again.

If anyone had asked Larned his religion he would probably have answered, "My mother's." And if, pursuing the enquiry, the curious-minded had interrogated Larned's mother, she would probably have answered, Catholic," and by way of explanation might have added: "Anglican, of course." Larned had taken his religion from his mother very much as he had taken his table-manners, and regarded deviation from her accepted views as merely bad form. No; an exception was made for (Roman) Catholicism; it was not bad form, it was foreign form. Quite an indefensible view; but, not having been called upon to defend it, probably Larned did not appreciate the fact. The subject of religion entered his mind, on the morning of this particular Sunday, only as an interesting incident to an absorbing question: Whom had Mowbray married and who was his wife's sister?

"By the way, Mowbray, you neglected in the hurry of introductions last night to announce the name of your sister-in-law," he said.

"Polly, short for Pauline, you know."

"I know, but Polly who?"

"Polly Masson," answered Mowbray in surprise. "I thought you knew I had married a Masson. Certainly you sent Marie a present with a charming note at the time, and most graciously referred to her family's distinguished connection with Canada. For Heaven's sake, don't let her know that you have forgotten, or, worse still, don't tell even me that the note was written by your secretary. My wife is keeping it against the day when you become Prime Minister."

Larned flushed uncomfortably. "Secretary be hanged!" he protested. "Of course, I wrote the note, but how

should I know whether Polly is—a full sister or—a half sister? There are lots of sisters who have different names, and brothers, too," he added, anxious to make out a complete defence and, as usual in such an endeavour succeeded to the edge of failure.

Mowbray laughed at his friend's embarrassment.

"Halves, you know," protested Larned.

"The Masson sisters go halves only in ordering me about," replied Mowbray.

"The Masson family is one of the oldest and best in French Canada," continued Larned, anxious to make amends for his blunder.

"In all Canada," corrected Mowbray.

"Or in all Canada," agreed Larned, wondering at his own stupidity; and, despairing of extricating himself, he turned his attention to the chops.

"They are excellent," said Larned, thinking to change the subject.

"They are," fervently assented Mowbray.

"Are they from Surrey?"

"Why, Larned, they are French-Canadians. What is the matter with you this morning?"

"I was speaking of the chops," said Larned.

"Then, man, why didn't you say so? We were talking about the girls."

And both men were amused at the misunderstanding.

"I say, Larned, you can't really believe all that stuff you said at East Badmington last spring about the French-Canadians. I cut it out of our paper, for the girls read everything of yours that is printed, and really I didn't care to have them read that."

"Politics is, at times, an awkward trade."

"It must be," drily remarked Mowbray. "I am quite sure you politicians often say things to your constituents that are contrary to your real feelings."

"I am afraid we often do," confessed Larned; "but let's not talk politics. I was just thinking what a relief it is to be away from the subject."

"With all my heart," replied Mowbray. "You must be fed up. We laymen talk politics as a relaxation, but you politicians, naturally, seek recreation in other directions. Hello! There is a motor. Here are the girls," he shouted.

Both men hastened to the door.

"Welcome home, you piously hungry creatures," called Mowbray.

"Good morning, Mr. Larned," the home-comers called together and laughed at their unanimity.

"The House of Laughter," said Larned laughingly. "Allan has been laughing at me all morning."

"Larned thought you might be halves," said Mowbray.

"Half-foolish?" asked Polly.

"One half good-looking?" asked Marie.

"That isn't fair," pouted Polly, throwing her coat over a nearby chair. "But I am as hungry as if it were the last day of Lent, and really I don't care who thinks me the bad-looking half of the family."

"Fishing so early in the morning, Miss Poll," challenged Mowbray.

"I am sure Allan has not reported me correctly, not at all correctly," said Larned.

"Pay no attention to what Allan says, Mr. Larned," advised Mrs. Mowbray. "We know him. And if you have finished your breakfast, please smoke; we shan't mind."

"Thank you, Mrs. Mowbray. I fear it will interfere with the enjoyment of your breakfast."

"By all means, smoke if you want to," added Polly. "We are like the mosquitoes at Mississquoi, smoke-proof."

"And stingful?" suggested Mowbray.

"Allan Mowbray, that's an unfair thing to say to two women who have just returned with a solemn injunction to return good for evil," charged Mrs. Mowbray. "We were especially warned against saying nasty things to those who defame us."

"And only rise in grace through resisting temptation," advised Mowbray. "We tempters have our place in the scheme of life."

"You had sensible advice at your church this morning," commented Larned.

"But trying," added Polly, "and not at all practical, at least in politics; is it, Mr. Larned?"

"Well, seldom practised in politics, Miss Masson," he admitted.

"I am not so sure, Mr. Larned," protested Mrs. Mowbray. "Surely our Catholic politicians at home never say nasty things about Protestants! That would be disobeying the injunction of the Church."

"Be careful, Mr. Larned!" warned Polly. "My sister takes everything seriously."

"And why not?" asked her sister. "Didn't Father Powell insist that we should take his injunction seriously? And if what he said was good for Catholics, isn't it equally good for Protestants?"

"But, nowadays, serious people are not taken seriously," answered Polly.

"I can't see why," replied Mrs. Mowbray. "I am sure our religious differences are at the bottom of all our unfortunate national troubles in Canada. Why shouldn't we talk of these things freely, and possibly we should learn not to defame each other? Then our troubles would be over."

"Who wants them over?" asked Mowbray. "This world would not be worth living in if we all became agreeable. A little spite, like pepper, seasons the dish."

"I have never heard you say anything disagreeable about anyone, Allan, except Polly and me. You never talk about priest-ridden French-Canadians, as do so many English-Canadians. That is the sort of thing that hurts," continued Mrs. Mowbray, turning to Larned. "It cuts to the quick," she said earnestly. "Do your people repeat that sort of thing for the pleasure of wounding, or are they credulous enough to believe it?"

"I am afraid I have only a superficial acquaintance with the Canada that speaks French, Mrs. Mowbray; and, naturally, since I have scant knowledge of the language."

"Some of your compatriots, equally handicapped, do not refrain from expressing the most definite opinions about us and our religious affairs," she replied. "I should like to have your views on the subject, Mr. Larned, since you are in politics."

"Larned has stipulated that we talk no politics, Marie," interrupted her husband. "He is tired of politics. I am sure he must be, after his weeks in London. We brought him here for a rest, not a row."

"But this isn't really politics," protested Mrs. Mowbray. "It is just ordinary, decent humanity."

"And what are politics?" asked her husband.

"Indecent, at times," broke in Polly hotly.

"Fie, Polly, and Mr. Larned our guest!" chided Allan.

Larned turned suddenly to Miss Masson. "We are old friends," he said.

In a moment, a look of confusion, almost of distress, came upon her face. She hesitated, and then asked: "Are we, Mr. Larned?"

"In the name of Heaven, where did you two meet?" cried Mowbray.

"Do you remember, Miss Masson?" asked Larned.

"I did not think you had remembered," she answered uneasily.

"How could I forget my first and only visit to fairy-land?" asked Larned smilingly.

Polly was clearly embarrassed. She arose from the breakfast-table and without answering walked over to the side-table, and then returned to the breakfast-table.

"For Heaven's sake!" exclaimed Mowbray. "Tell us the occasion at once. This is all Greek to me."

"It was years ago," said Larned; then looking again at Miss Masson, he hastily corrected himself. "No, it could not have been long ago. It was in my junior year at college, when I was its representative at a McGill conversazione. There, thanks to a member of the Reception Committee, I met a most winsome young lady—" And again Larned hesitated. "It was the most delightful evening of my life," he concluded lamely.

Allan, noticing that Larned, having bravely commenced to relate an incident, was, for some reason, apparently dubious about continuing, encouraged him by calling, "Bravo, Larned! You talk like a story-book. Go on!"

Larned turned towards Polly as if to determine her humour, and failing, continued: "She was very young," and upon his lips there played a teasing smile, "very young; on her own confession a flapper the morning before—and allowed to attend such a grown-up affair in honour of the graduation of a favourite cousin. Yes, I remember as if it were the other night," he said.

"Don't stop, Billy. You are exasperating," cried Mowbray, as Larned paused in his recital.

"There isn't much more to tell," he said. "I wickedly stole the quondam flapper from her chaperone, and we had all the remaining dances on the programme together —and sat several of them out. I was a stranger in Montreal, and the young lady kindly took pity on my loneliness."

"And it was several weeks before Polly recovered the good graces of our aunt who had chaperoned her," said Marie.

"You knew this, and never told me!" charged her husband.

"I knew of Polly's escapade, but not until now did I know that Mr. Larned was concerned," she answered laughingly.

"And you, Polly! Were you aware that Larned was your partner in this apparently disgraceful proceeding?" asked Mowbray in mock severity.

"There was nothing disgraceful about it," she protested hotly.

"On Larned's confession, it was almost an elopement."

"Nothing of the sort," said the indignant Polly.

"But have you not met since that time?" persisted Mowbray.

"Not until last night," answered Larned, "and then in the darkness of the drive and the quick retirement of the ladies afterwards, I did not recognise Miss Masson as my partner at the McGill dance."

"Well, of all the strange things," commented Mowbray thoughtfully. "You didn't write?" he asked suspiciously.

Larned looked at Miss Masson, and both smiled. "We didn't write; but that was not my fault," he explained.

"You hadn't remembered the name?" pursued the incredulous Mowbray.

"You should not be so inquisitive," admonished his wife.

Larned hesitated. "I really can't continue without Miss Masson's permission," he said.

"I think the whole story less damaging than the introduction," replied Polly curtly.

"If it is not betraying a confidence," said Larned. "I may say that the young lady, at my insistence, scribbled her name on the cuff of my shirt and—and—the laundryman washed it away," he added, with the air of a man rendered abjectly helpless by calamity.

"Washed it away,' echoed Mowbray.

"Yes," said Larned. "And, for once in his life, made a clean job. Not a very romantic aftermath, was it?"

Polly laughingly arose and walked again to the side-table, staring at its contents.

"What are you looking for, dear?" her sister asked.

"Nothing," she replied, once more returning to the breakfast-table.

Mowbray rapped his head as if trying to remember something. "You have usually a good memory for names," he said suspiciously.

"It was a case of losing my head with my heart," said Larned, who, having closely watched Miss Masson, now felt confident that she was not being unduly provoked. "I had forgotten the name of the official who was responsible for my introduction," he continued, "and the name of the chaperone; I had forgotten everything that would enable me to recover *la petite Canadienne*. I had remembered only as one remembers a pleasant dream. And, like a dream, my evening could only be recalled and not lived on. I was the more confused, since Miss Masson could not then speak a word of English."

"Polly couldn't speak English?" asked Mowbray.

Larned, suddenly becoming aware of a possibiliity, looked enquiringly at Miss Masson—"Was I?" he questioned.

"You probably were," replied Mowbray.

"An innocent abroad?" added Larned.

Polly laughingly lifted her coat as if to put it away.

"Sit down, Poll. Face the music," commanded Mowbray with mock severity. "With all your faults, you are not a quitter. Polly has spoken English as well as French since childhood," he said, as his sister-in-law, still laughing, resumed her seat.

"And to think," bemoaned Larned, "that I, a wisdom-proud junior, was taken in by a mere slip of a girl

midway in her 'teens. If I had been a freshman, there might have been an excuse. But a junior! Oh, Lord! It is terrible. What a blessing I have gone thus far through life oblivious of my humiliation!"

"And your French, is it improved since first we met?" enquired Polly pleasantly.

"My poor school-book French! May the gods forgive you for making sport of it. And you did it with such an air of sympathy! I fear I shall never again have confidence in womankind. Mowbray, deceit is instinctive in the sex," insisted Larned.

"You do your French injustice, Mr. Larned," expostulated Polly.

"I could have said: *'Voyez-vous le cheval?'* in faultless style," he admitted naïvely. "But, of course, there were no horses at the dance—not even the picture of a horse. I know, because I looked for one, and even thought of trying to lead my partner to the museum in the hope of finding the skeleton of a horse. There were many things I could have said in French quite correctly, but, somehow, twist and turn as I did, they could not be fitted into the conversation. It seemed as if all the things I wanted to say were irregular."

"Great Heavens!" ejaculated Mowbray.

"I mean the verbs I wanted to use were of irregular construction," explained Larned, "and I kept getting confused in my moods and tenses. At supper, if my memory is right, we succeeded fairly well."

"Polly would make a deaf-mute feel at home at a supper-table," remarked Mowbray with scant sympathy.

"A young folks' model conversation ought to be appended to the grammars," suggested Mowbray.

"The French I had learned at school," continued Larned, "fell provokingly short of expressing my thoughts as we sat out our dances in a corner of the library under huge palms that hid us from the searching eyes of the chaperone."

"No. It wouldn't be of any use," answered Larned, with a mournful shake of the head. "I am sure, it was never within a dry grammarian's heart to put on paper what I wanted to say—and couldn't—that night. A poet might have done better. As a matter of fact, I did manage to draw assistance from the French poetry we were reading that year at college. Possibly Miss Masson may remember my quotations."

Polly humourously raised a hand in protest. "Don't ask me," she protested.

"You can't have had a very comfortable evening," remarked Mowbray.

"Companionship is not dependent upon the language that is spoken and written," answered Larned. "But if my tongue was useless, my ears were worse, for several times during the evening they caught my partner's words upside down. Once she looked sweetly and innocently into my face, and I thought I heard her say, 'Stupid donkey!' 'What was that?' I asked, watching closely the motion of her lips—for my eyes were more French than my tongue and ears. 'Say it slowly,' I urged. And my partner, looking wonderingly at me, said it had been a stupid year. I suppose it was stupid to have been so easily satisfied, but I simply could not look into the wide open, innocent brown eyes of that young minx without feeling sympathy and sincerity. And so it was *l'âne stupid* and not *l'an stupid,* Miss Masson?"

"Everything that one says is outlawed after ten years," protested Miss Masson, who, at the beginning of Mr. Larned's narration, had evidently been embarrassed, then almost indignant, and now joined with the others in the laughter that followed its conclusion. "I don't care to remember the details of my youthful escapades," she said. "I refuse to answer for the sins of my near-childhood."

"I like to think of mine," said Mowbray, "and those of my friends. Now that you have told me the first act of your young life's story, I recall having been a sort of

dramatis persona in the second act. You must not forget, Larned, when you returned from Montreal, we were together in the Chapter House. I can remember that you came back in the seventh heaven of delight, and were particularly insistent upon the charms of *les Canadiennes*. But that our Pauline should have been the inspiration of your enthusiasm, seems incredible."

"Allan——" remonstrated Polly severely.

. . . . . .

That evening as the Mowbrays were retiring, Mrs. Mowbray asked her husband: "Allan, do you believe Mr. Larned's story about the cuff and the laundry?"

"Certainly," assured Mowbray. "There is nothing remarkable about it. His shirt was bound to find its way to the laundry."

"You know what I mean, Allan."

"Was Larned prevented from writing Polly by losing her address?" said Mowbray. "That's the question! What a round-about way a woman takes in asking even a simple question! I have a theory on the subject, but it is not to be had for the asking."

"Please."

"No."

"Please, Allan."

"I am not sure," replied Mowbray generously; "but about that time he was thinking of going in for politics, and I have often heard him say that a politician had to pay the penalty for political success by domestic sacrifice. He held that love and politics were incompatible."

"Well?" said Mrs. Mowbray.

"It may be that he thought a French-Canadian alliance would be a barrier to success in the politics of Orange Badmington."

"O—o—oh!" said Mrs. Mowbray.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH

AT THE FOOT OF THE HILL

"Higgins, I shall drive the motor."

"Allan Mowbray, you shall do no such thing." Needless to say, the protest came from Mrs. Mowbray. "We have had one misfortune after another every time you have driven, since coming to England. One break-down after another."

"The car is just out of the shops, my dear. It has been overhauled and is running like a well-regulated clock. There isn't the slightest chance of trouble."

"I have looked it over, madam, and it seems in perfect condition," corroborated the dependable Higgins.

"Oh, very well, Allan, drive if you will. We'll not reach the Abbey without an accident. Mark my words: there is trouble ahead."

"No, all the trouble is behind, Marie."

"I wish I could believe it."

The four Canadians seated themselves in the motor, the headstrong Mowbray at the wheel, Mrs. Mowbray at his side, and Miss Masson and Larned in the second seat. It was their intention to spend the afternoon in visiting the ruined abbey which lies ten, perhaps twelve, miles in a south-easterly direction from "Surrey Court".

"Driving on English roads has for me an irresistible temptation," commented Mowbray, as they whirled along a highway made hard and smooth by the combined labour and skill of innumerable Romans, Normans, and English-

men. "Chops and roads; they are England's charms, and for the life of me I can't decide which I like the better. Probably they are both at their best in sympathetic combination."

"You are quite sure you haven't a mental reservation for English women?" asked Mrs. Mowbray.

"By Jove! They are stunning, the women of England! I would have put them first, if I hadn't found the best-looking and best-natured woman in the world right in Canada."

"Allan, I shan't care if we have an accident," said Mrs. Mowbray; "not even if you mean not what you say!"

"Please remember there are others in the car, Marie," called her sister.

"You are fond of England, Miss Masson?" suggested Larned.

"Very."

"But do not prefer it to Canada?"

"I do not prefer the garden to the field. I love them both."

"The dip and rise of softly swelling hills across which the curling ribbon of the road winds leisurely between neat hedges," cried Mowbray, dramatically waving his hand towards the landscape.

"Allan, keep both hands on the wheel," commanded Mrs. Mowbray.

Promptly obedient, Mowbray continued: "The fields in patches, coloured brown and green, golden with corn, scarlet with poppies, yellow with buttercups; the circular bunches of trees under whose shade fat cattle stand lazily switching their tails at flies; the woods, hangers, shaws and coppices, glades, dells, dingles and combes, all set out so orderly and precise that, from a hill, the country has the appearance of a patchwork quilt set in a pleasant irregularity, studded with straggling farms, and little sleepy villages where the resonant note of the church clock checks off the drowsy hours."

"Oh, Allan, how perfectly delightful. I am quite sure you have the soul of a poet. I did not know that you could say such beautiful things."

"The road that runs through this quilt-land," he continued, "seems like a thread on which villages and market-towns are strung, beads of endless variety, some huddled in a bunch upon a hill, some long and straggling, some thatched and worn, red-bricked, and creeper-covered, others white with roofs of purple slate, others of grey-stone, others of warm yellow. All alive with birds and flowers, and village children, butterflies and trees, fed by broad rivers, or hanging over singing streams, or deep in the lush-grass of water-meadows gay with kingcups."

"Splendid, Mowbray. I congratulate you on the description," called Larned.

"I can't tell a lie, not even a silent lie," answered Mowbray. "They are not chips from my workshop, old man; they are by a gardener chap, named Dion Clayton Calthrop. I found them in his book in the library the other day, and remembered, for they seemed to describe what is left of rural England. They are good, aren't they?" asked Mowbray, adding in a spirit of magnanimous condescension, "even though they aren't mine."

Slowly they mounted the hill towards the Abbey and, when midway up, without a sigh, without even a warning rumble, the car stopped.

"Stalled, by all that is perplexing," said Mowbray, applying the brakes. "Don't be alarmed, my dear," he told his wife as she hysterically grasped his arm. "We are going to volplane gently and gracefully, stern foremost, to the bottom of the hill, and there we shall rest awhile."

"I said so," cried Mrs. Mowbray, catching her breath as the car reached the bottom. "I said so," she repeated in tones that were of annoyance and triumph. "I warned you, Allan. The moment you took the wheel, I knew we were in for trouble. Perhaps you will listen to me after this."

"Cruel words, woman, but it was ever so. One moment all sweetness and smiles, and the next all scowls and scolds. How on earth was I to know that the garage man had tied a hoodoo on the blooming car?"

"It is you who are the hoodoo," she charged.

Meanwhile, Mowbray, having moved in and out all the adjustments that were to be reached from the seat, descended and inspected the wheels.

"No tire trouble," he announced critically.

"Silly, as if a flat wheel could stop a perfectly good car in the middle of a hill," taunted his sister-in-law.

Allan paid no attention to this apparently reasonable, but caustic, remark. He opened the hood and vigorously shook the crank shaft; the engine remained unresponsive. Allan gloomily thrust his hands into his pockets, and moved his lips as if silently cursing the makers of motor cars, they and their families, even unto many generations.

"Allan Mowbray, take those dirty hands out of your pockets," admonished his wife sharply. "How can you spoil that suit when you know I like it?"

"Certainly, my dear," meekly responded Mowbray, at once folding his oily, dust-begrimed hands over an hitherto immaculate waistcoat. "What do you know about cars, Larned?" he asked. "You have had all sorts of experiences with machines. Can't you remember something from your experiences in the Dobbins-McMichaelan war? Then the cylinders of the East Badmington machine were choked with carbon. But, no, that can't be our trouble, for the car is just out of the shop."

"I am afraid my knowledge does not extend beyond political machinery," laughed Larned. "He is a wise shoemaker who sticks to his last."

"If only I had insisted upon Higgins sticking to this car," moaned Mrs. Mowbray.

"I remember hearing of a colleague who, stranded on the roads near Ottawa, had the garage man rush to his

assistance with a truck-full of tools, only to find the car out of gasoline," commented Larned.

Mowbray picked up a stick and, removing the cap from the gasoline tank, thrust it deeply to the bottom.

"You win, Larned," he announced, looking at the stick. "Devilish clever, I call that! We are out of gasoline. Oh, Higgins, you thing of dust! Think of the perquisites you have had from my bounty. To be treated thus—by you—is beyond human endurance. But there is a difference between gas and gasoline. Where am I to find a garage man without the truck of tools and with a gallon or two of the needful? Heads, forward march; tails, to the rear," he called, spinning a penny on the road. The heads have it," judicially decided Mowbray, bending over the coin on the roadway. Then he started up the hill the car had failed to climb.

"Wait for me, Allan. I am going along," cried Polly.

"No, I am going," remonstrated Mrs. Mowbray. "I want to talk to Allan."

"Please let Polly come, Marie; she is more sympathetic. When a fellow is in trouble he needs a soft-hearted friend. Really, Marie, my contrition knows no bounds; it is quite incapable of expansion. And, besides, I know exactly what you are going to say."

But Mrs. Mowbray was already out of the car.

" 'Egad, this is more than I desire. 'Tis the frying pan to meet the fire," protested Mowbray as the two commenced to climb the hill. "Never again, Marie. No, my dear, not even if you insist; never will I. . . ." they heard Mowbray protest until his words were lost in the distance.

Larned and Polly sat silently gazing upon the retreating couple, and when they had disappeared, smiled at each other with just a trace of mutual embarrassment. Larned took off his hat and laid it on the seat.

"You weren't angry at my story of our meeting at the McGill dance?" he asked.

"No," she said, and wondered if she had told the truth.

"I feared afterwards that I had said too much," he explained. "I'm sorry if I did. You are quite sure that it was all right?"

"Quite."

"Do you ever compare England with France, Miss Masson?" asked Larned after a time, and obviously attempting to make conversation.

"Can you compare the rose and the lily?" she asked. "Both are beautiful, but in different ways."

"Surely one has a stronger appeal than the other. I know people who think there is nothing in all the world so fragrant and so beautiful as the rose."

"Red?" she suggested.

Larned looked at Miss Masson with a start. He thought of Lord Steeleton's remark that red roses had become a pleasing conceit of Imperialists. Did Miss Masson know? Did her words carry political significance? "And I know others who feel just as strongly about the lily," he continued, after a pause.

"Orange?" she enquired, with every appearance of innocence.

Larned was now convinced that Miss Masson's words carried political significance. "You take a keen interest in politics," he said, looking intently into her eyes.

"Most women are thinking of politics nowadays," she answered evasively.

"It seems to me you have an interest that is out of the ordinary," said Larned, again scrutinising his companion's face, in which he thought there lay a trace of confusion.

"I am interested," Polly replied frankly.

"And would not continue the discussion this morning," he challenged.

"Because you were evading, and I do not like evasions; nor do I like—"

"Evaders?" he suggested.

"That isn't what I intended to say," answered Polly quickly. "I am anxious, as I presume all women should be, to know the truth about politics. I didn't ask for the vote. I don't think I wanted it. At any rate, I hadn't thought much about it, but now that I have the suffrage, I desire to vote intelligently. Of course, where we live at Mississquoi House, we hear largely one side of the question, and that the French-Canadian side, for with us nowadays there is little that distinguishes Liberal from Conservative."

"In what phase of politics are you interested? The tariff?" suggested Larned.

"Only partially. Allan is a free-trader, and I presume his views have affected mine. But I suppose we shall get along somehow, high tariff, low tariff, or no tariff. No, the tariff does not interest me particularly."

"It is the dividing line in our politics."

"After all, it is made up of salt and sugar and woollens, and material stuffs."

"They are not unimportant," observed Larned.

"That's true. I would dearly love to have free dress materials," answered the candid Miss Masson.

Larned glanced admiringly at the becoming clothes of his companion.

"I am afraid all women are natural free-traders," he said. "Woman's vote may have a profound influence on the tariff. Picture a display of Parisian millinery by the side of a campaign orator on the hustings. Think of the effect when he cries to an audience of woman voters: 'Marked down from $60.00 to $39.98! Going—going—if you don't vote right, they are gone!' The possibilities are terrifying," he said with a laugh, in which Polly joined.

"Sounds irresistible to my feminine ears," she confessed.

"But tell me, please, if you are not particularly interested in the tariff, what do you consider of greater importance?"

"Things that affect *l'esprit,* that determine what sort of men and women we are to be. I can tell you better in French what I mean, Mr. Larned."

"Never mind. I believe I understand," he answered hastily. "You once sounded my limitations in the French language."

Polly smiled.

"Will you give me a specific illustration of the political activities you mean?" he asked.

"The future of our country within the Empire," she said.

"What would you have it?"

"How would you have it?"

"Don't you think the different parts of the Empire must be brought closer together if they are not to drift apart?" he asked.

"Do you?"

"That's hardly fair," protested Larned. "I asked my question first."

"But should not teachers instruct their pupils first, and ask questions afterwards?" countered Miss Masson.

"I hardly think that I may be set down as a professor of politics," protested Larned.

"Politics are your profession."

"I am beginning to believe you are a skilful amateur," he laughed. "However, I have no objection to stating my views. The wise men apparently think that some form of federation is necessary to hold the Empire together."

"Including the Member from East Badmington?" she pressed.

"I am rapidly coming to the conclusion that the Member for East Badmington is a rank outsider on the subject. Clearly, he is not informed as to what is being said and done about it; but, to him, Great Britain is worth saving."

"Dear me! Is it as bad as that?" cried Polly. "Does Britain need saving?"

"It would appear as if some form of federation were necessary to prevent the inevitable drift of parts."

"If there were evidence of drift?"

"I think so."

"Please give me an illustration."

"Is it too much to say there is a strong Americanising influence in Canada?" he suggested.

"Not in the Canada that speaks French."

"No," he admitted.

"In English Canada?" she suggested.

"Yes."

"I am awfully stupid, I know, but will you tell me just what you mean by American influence?" asked Polly.

"We are building upon social and industrial lines that are American."

"And shouldn't you, if you want to? Are they bad?" she asked. "Oh, I see, she said, after a pause. "You want to introduce the English order of things. But do you think it will be taken up in Canada?" she asked reflectively.

"I am afraid you misunderstand me. I was citing the American influence in Canada simply as evidence of drift. We are living beside a very aggressive and wealthy people. If we intend to preserve our political identity, we must commence by ensuring our industrial and social identity."

"Well, what are you going to do about it? I am sure I can't see how Imperial Federation will prevent your people copying American styles. Really, I can't, Mr. Larned."

Larned did not answer, for at the moment their attention was distracted by a voice shouting, "Hurrah!" Upon looking up, they saw Allan at the top of the hill, and with him Mrs. Mowbray. A few paces behind them trudged an enormously fat man, carrying a tin can.

"They have the gasoline. We shall yet see the Abbey, Mr. Larned. I am so glad." And Polly waved her hand delightedly toward the Mowbrays.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH

POLLY TICKS AGAIN

THE four picnickers found nothing more exciting in their visit to the ruined abbey that lies half-hidden by overgrowth on the top of a Surrey hill, than a pleasant day, which could have been had in any English meadow under a clear English sky. The conversation did not turn into political channels, and consisted of the little nothings which the reader may have said and listened to and laughed about, when in the open air on a pleasant day with agreeable company. It was not until the party had returned home, until dinner was over and the last hand of an uneventful game of bridge had been played, that politics were revived. It was Allan who innocently offended by harking back to the sadness of viewing ruins.

"English ruins are but inanimate things of stone and mortar," Polly had replied.

"I am not so sure," expostulated Mowbray.

"At any rate, English ruins are due to English neglect," she persisted. "That there are ruins in England, is simply because Englishmen themselves have preferred something else. In Canada, an alien nationality is destroying that which we French-Canadians hold most dear," she said.

"Polly ticks again!" murmured Mowbray.

"Villain," protested his sister-in-law indignantly. "You two men are of English-Canadian nationality," she continued; "we two women are of French-Canadian nationality. You are the stronger, and insist that we put off

our ways and accept yours. We four are British, and under British principles all are equally entitled to pursue their national ways."

"Very succinctly put, Miss Masson," said Larned; "but are you sure that you have expressed fairly, as I presume you intended, the situation at home? Have we in Ontario attempted to take away that which is distinctive in your nationality?"

"You insist upon our young people being instructed solely in the English language."

"'Give me the child of seven; you may have him at eleven'," challenged Mowbray.

"I understand instruction in the French language is permitted, and have heard our school authorities say that their French-Canadian pupils speak and write very good French," remonstrated Larned. "I once heard an Ontario educationist boast that his pupils were speaking better French than the school-children of Quebec."

"I doubt that; but true or untrue, it is aside from the question," she argued. "I am surprised that intelligent men persist in confusing the issue. Nationality is dependent upon something more than the mere learning of a language. I may speak English, at least try to—"

"May even have come to England to improve your accent," interrupted Mowbray.

"I am sure I should never have learned to speak English properly in Canada," retorted Polly. "But speaking English does not make me English, and never will. I was brought up a French-Canadian, instructed in all the things I know in the French language, and I want—oh, so passionately want—to have those of my nationality everywhere in the Canada, that was once French, free to continue in our forefathers' national footsteps."

"You are a British subject," suggested Larned.

"That's my point," she replied. "And as such I am entitled to national freedom." Miss Masson spoke earn-

estly, and with a spark of anger. "Pardon me if I speak with too much fervour, Mr. Larned. I have been taught that Britain stands for freedom; and yet, in spite of British pretensions to generosity, I am constantly made to feel that I am of a conquered race."

"Are you not inconsistent in admitting that learning English has not destroyed your nationality, and then arguing that learning English will destroy that of the children of your nationality?" asked Larned.

"Surely you are not under the impression that we are protesting merely against French-Canadian children being taught English. We are protesting against the provision that they be taught *exclusively in English.*"

"I confess we want Ontario to be an English-Canadian province," said Larned.

"You want something and another wants something else—a clash of wants," commented Mowbray.

"Is it not inevitable where there are two nationalities in a single State?" asked Larned. "Unfortunate, but inevitable?"

"Von Bülow has said so," said Miss Masson; "but he was speaking of Germany, where uniformity used to be the order of all days."

"Americans have said the same thing," suggested Larned.

"They were speaking of the United States. But, as you reminded me, I am a British subject. The Hindoos are not being forcibly made over into Englishmen on the plea that they are British subjects."

"We offer you a greater compliment, Miss Masson."

"Keep your compliment, Mr. Larned, and give us Christianity in its stead. You were this afternoon suggesting that the parts of the Empire are drifting away."

"When?" asked Mowbray in surprise.

Miss Masson and Larned looked at each other and smiled, and Miss Masson continued: "If there be drift, it is through the failure of the dominating nationality to

respect the national instincts of a minority that is conscious of possessing nationality. You were speaking of the inevitable, Mr. Larned; two people cannot live happily under one roof unless each respects the other's rights,"

"We are giving you that which the world has admitted is most valuable."

"Germanising," said Miss Masson indignantly. "The Kultur argument translated into English," she added. "If a man expropriates my cottage and builds upon it an eight-storey apartment-building, he does not assuage my feelings."

"Every day expropriations are being made for the general advantage of the State," replied Larned.

"You are not now expropriating mere inanimate lands; you are engaged in trying to expropriate—human souls," she replied.

"If each nationality in Canada were to have school rights for its particular language, we should soon arrive at chaos."

"Immigrants must take their chances: come or stay at home, as they please. French-Canadians are the senior nationality and a conquered people," she said.

"Ceded," corrected Mrs. Mowbray.

"Bah!" answered Miss Masson. "Put it as do the English-Canadian historians. We were conquered. That is no disgrace; the foe was brave. But will the foe please be as human as he was brave? Bravery and generosity usually go together."

"You must remember, Polly, that Canada was taken by the English of England, and is now ruled by the English of Canada," advised Mowbray.

"Thank you, Allan. The distinction is vital. We French-Canadians have good reason to remember it," she said bitterly.

"Are not French-Canadians largely immigrants in Ontario?" asked Larned.

"There were several generations of our own family who lived long lives in its land before the coming of the

English. We have earned the right, as a nationality, to settle where we please, and be French-speaking British in all the land taken from our forefathers," Miss Masson protested.

"You have Quebec."

"Would you suggest that there the dominating nationality should apply the Ontario principle, and insist that English-speaking youth be instructed solely in French?"

"That is its privilege under the British North America Act," replied Larned.

"Would you not protest against the exercise of that privilege? I would, French-Canadian as I am."

"There is a difference," said Larned.

"Then why did you attempt a comparison?" she asked. "Are we French-Canadians to have freedom merely within a limited pale of the land which Britain acquired from our forefathers?"

"And our Church," interrupted Mrs. Mowbray. "Why do folk in Ontario say such nasty things about our Church?"

" 'Two women to every man'," hummed Mowbray.

"Allan Mowbray, for once in your life be serious," commanded Mrs. Mowbray. "I want to ask Mr. Larned several questions."

"Three is extravaganza," added Mowbray, by way of apology for paraphrasing the lines of a song that was popular in the music halls years ago.

"Allan Mowbray, I really must insist that you do not interrupt me," said his wife. "This is the first opportunity I have had of asking an English-Canadian high up in politics, a few pertinent questions, and it may be my last."

"Sure to be your last," groaned Mowbray.

"Ask me anything you like, Mrs. Mowbray. I am interested," said Larned.

"Why do your politicians so constantly decry our Church?" she asked.

"We have no quarrel with Roman Catholics as such, but we believe the Roman Catholic Church has not in the past exercised a good influence upon the country. We are afraid of it."

"You cannot separate a Church from its people," protested Miss Masson hotly. "Are my sister and I likely to be bad citizens because we are Catholics?"

"Fie, Polly, that is being personal," chided Mowbray.

"Does it strike you, Mr. Larned, that I, for instance, am liable to do anything inimical to the State at the dictation of a priest?" persisted Miss Masson, heedless of her brother-in-law's protest.

"Or do anything at the dictation of man?" suggested Mowbray.

"All Roman Catholics are not of your intelligence," urged Larned.

"Thank you, Mr. Larned; and all Protestants are not of your intelligence," she snapped. "There are degrees of intelligence in every nationality and every Church."

"Let us take Brazil as an illustration—"

"Where a large percentage of the people are aborigines," she interjected.

"The Protestant countries are generally conceded to be more prosperous and contain fewer illiterates than Roman Catholic countries," he said seriously.

"Please take one country at a time, Mr. Larned," requested Miss Masson. "And it is you who selected Brazil. Would Protestants better care for the aboriginal problems of that country than Catholics have cared for them? Are Canadian-Indians more literate, more industrious, than those of Brazil? Are the negroes of the Southern States, who, I am told, are largely Baptists and Methodists, morally or culturally, or in any other way, superior to the negroes attending Catholic Churches in South American Republics?" she asked.

"It's an awfully long way from home," complained Mrs. Mowbray.

Mowbray laughed at his wife's effort to bring the subject of conversation back to Canada. "It is after eleven. Let Mr. Larned take a peaceful mind to bed," he advised.

"Allan, Mr. Larned is a politician, and politicians never go to bed before day-break."

"That's because of uneasy consciences," he explained.

"I am sure Mr. Larned will not mind explaining a matter which has long bothered me," said Mrs. Mowbray.

"Certainly not, Mrs. Mowbray, if I can," volunteered Larned.

"But, Marie, you are so illogical!" protested Mowbray. "All women are illogical, and to think the Government has given them the suffrage!"

"I suppose we are illogical," answered Mrs. Mowbray, "since everyone says so; but please don't interrupt me just now. I gather from your reported speeches," she continued, turning to Larned, "that you have little confidence in the Opposition."

"Your impression is correct," answered Larned smilingly, but decisively.

"And if I am to believe the leaders of the Opposition, you, on the Government side, are no better."

"They say so," he agreed laughingly.

"The Lord knows I tried to protect you, Larned," cried Mowbray. "You are walking straight into a tiger's den. I wash my hands of the affair. Remember, everybody: the coroner's jury cannot find me guilty of even contributory negligence; I am innocent."

"Am I illogical in concluding that our members of Parliament, on the whole, are a bad lot?" urged Mrs. Mowbray, evidently annoyed at Allan's continued interruptions.

"Present company excepted," suggested Mowbray.

"Mr. Larned knows I am not reflecting upon him personally."

"Don't worry about my feelings, Mrs. Mowbray. We politicians have, in the struggle for existence, grown impervious to reflections."

"The press says our politics are impure," she continued. "The politicians accuse each other of inefficiency and corruption; and yet the English-Canadian press argues that we should extend the administration of the politicians until it covers the whole range of ethical activities, even our charities."

"But the press is, at the same time, advocating the reform of politics and politicians," argued Larned.

"And has been for years," interrupted Mowbray. "Have we better men than the Fathers of Confederation in our public life to-day?"

"I fear you are a pessimist, Mowbray."

"Now, please, Mr. Larned, pay no attention to Allan just now. Are the men in the Provincial Legislatures better than those in the Federal House?"

"Modesty forbids a reply."

"Again the press tells us in one editorial that our representatives in the Legislature are inefficient and corrupt, and in another that this inefficient corrupt institution, and not the Church, is the proper body to provide for the education of our youth."

"I am afraid you underrate the ability of our legislators and exaggerate their corruptibility," said the Minister.

"I think I can defend my contention by quoting the member for East Badmington on the failings of a party which holds more than a third of the seats in the Dominion House."

"Oh, Lord!" ejaculated Mowbray. "But it's too late now," he groaned. "Anything is liable to happen."

"There are many who think with you, Mrs. Mowbray, that the State is making a sad mess of education," said

Larned. "Protestant opinion is divided on the subject. Practically all Protestant denominations have schools of their own, which, I suppose, may be fairly taken as indicating that the State schools are not all they should be."

"I am glad you have mentioned the Protestant schools. Perhaps you will tell me *why they are only for good boys.*"

"I am afraid I don't quite understand, Mrs. Mowbray," he said.

"A personal experience will perhaps best tell what I mean. Not long ago two boys in our village got into trouble. Reading sensational stories of crime which our legislators allow to be freely circulated, they proceeded to imitate their heroes and were found one night with a couple of dark lanterns in the village store. Their mothers came to me. I was powerless. Of course, the law had to take its course. They were technically guilty of house-breaking, or some such thing. One of the boys was of Catholic parentage, the other of Protestant. It was then to my bewilderment I learned that *the Protestant Churches had provided schools for the education of good boys only.*" Mrs. Mowbray paused and waited for Mr. Larned to reply.

"I must confess I had never thought of the subject in that light before," he said thoughtfully.

"The Catholic boy was sent to an institution presided over by the Christian Brothers," she continued, "where during those precarious years that follow childhood he will receive instruction in Christian ethics. There was no Protestant Church school willing to take the other boy; at least, so I was told."

"We have a very good institution for such boys. True, it is not under the direction of the Church, but—"

"What's a Church for?" interrupted Mrs. Mowbray.

"You don't know Marie as I do, Larned," advised Mowbray, laughing and arising as if to declare the controversy ended. "Marie never lets go. At home my wife

supervises the poultry; and if she finds a hen that won't produce according to the bogie, she puts her in the infirmary, feeds her and starves her, coaxes her and scolds her, and if she doesn't come up to the scratch, or rather the trap nest record, she wrings her neck."

"Is my neck in danger?" enquired Larned laughingly.

"Not if, like a sensible, tired man, with big things to do, you go to bed and have a rest."

"Mrs. Mowbray's point is well taken that the Catholic Church looks after its bad boys and the Protestant Churches leave theirs to someone else," said Larned seriously.

"Marie's points are always well taken," laughed Mowbray.

"You said I was illogical," complained Mrs. Mowbray.

"If you hadn't been, you wouldn't have asked me to marry you."

"I didn't ask you," she replied indignantly.

"Well, you were so attractive I had to ask you. I can't see the difference," said her husband.

. . . . . .

On the following morning before leaving, Larned searched for Miss Masson to bid her farewell. He found her in the rose-garden. "Surely," he thought, "of all the many English women who have inhaled the perfume and charm of this old garden, none had more entirely fitted into its beautiful setting than this daughter of the New France that became British.

"I have come to thank you for a week-end which has been most interesting," he said.

"If not placid."

"Better than placid—pleasant," replied Larned. "And when you return to Canada, I am to have the pleasure of meeting you again, for Mrs. Mowbray has invited me to Mississquoi House. A *boutonnière,* please."

"Red or white, Mr. Larned?" she asked, hesitating between two rose bushes, one red and the other white.

"Beggars are not supposed to be choosers."

Miss Masson selected a red rose-bud and pinned it on Larned's lapel.

"Your preference?" he asked.

"No," she replied; "yours."

"You once allowed me to take a white rosebud."

"Did I?" asked Miss Masson innocently.

"Don't you remember?"

"We were very young," she said.

"And very happy," added Larned, bending over the rose-bushes. With some care he selected a white rose in full bloom and placed it gravely in Miss Masson's hair.

CHAPTER THE NINTH

MR. KEN-LAKE APPEARS, WEARING A RED ROSE

"RIPPING!"

Miss Masson sprang off the bench from which she had been tying a vine to the top of the roof and hastened to a corner of the green-house where a leaning board had created a rough, reflecting glass. Slowly she turned before her improvised mirror, and then asked: "Tell me where, Tommy, please."

He was a soft-voiced Englishman in his thirties, who thus suddenly disturbed Polly at her work later in the morning of Larned's departure; not tall, but well-knit, sun-browned, with firm chin, and clear grey eyes that were without guile. He was a neighbour, Thomas Geoffrey Ken-Lake by name, and it had been through years of family acquaintance with the Mowbray family that Surrey Court had been taken for the autumn months.

"Always ripping, Polly," he answered. "But just now as you stood with arms outstretched towards Heaven, like a nymph of the sea preparing to dive into her native element, you were more than ever a picture too ripping for words."

"Oh, the provoking English language!" pouted Polly. "You frightened me terribly, Tommy. I thought it was my frock that was ripping."

"It really is."

"I meant *se déchirer,*" she explained.

"No," said Tommy, examining Polly with critical and approving eyes. "Your frock is soundly seamed and delightfully becoming."

"You are back from London, that dreadful and lovable London."

"I am back," corroborated Tommy.

"But, my! What a withered *boutonnière*! You will some day find yourself cast out of the society of fastidious Federals, if you are not more particular about your red roses," she said, removing the offending flower and replacing it with a fresh bloom.

"Thanks, awfully."

"If you are going to wear red roses, for Heaven's sake wear roses that are red; not those withered beyond recognition."

"I was away for 48 hours, 32 minutes and 19 seconds; and you can't expect a rose to last forever."

"Were the florists' shops closed in London?"

"You gave me that rose," he said, picking up the flower which Polly had discarded.

"Silly man."

"I can't, Polly, really I can't bear to part with the roses you give me."

"You have done it heaps of times before."

"I have a collection of withered buds at home."

"You are getting worse," chided Polly.

"Right oh!" admitted Ken-Lake.

"Fetch me a pail of water," she commanded.

Returning with a sprinkling-can full of water, Ken-Lake placed it on the bench, and then straddling the hickory chair that stood in the aisle of the green-house, he placed his elbows upon its back, leaned his head upon his hands, and watched Polly working over her plants.

"When did you return?" she enquired.

"Two long hours ago," he sighed. "I have been watching for you from the library window."

The amateur gardener industriously worked on in silence.

"I'm afraid it's no use, Polly," said Ken-Lake, after a while. "I can't go on in this way. We simply have to be something more than friends."

"The English language *is* provoking," said Polly, changing the subject and picking up the sprinkler.

"It would be perfectly understandable if you allowed me to anglicise your name," he said hopefully.

"What's in a name?"

"Everything to me in changing one," sighed her neighbour.

"You promised not to mention that particular subject again until you came to Canada."

"I know. But what's a chap to do when he makes a promise he can't keep? Anyhow, it was made under *duress*: you threatened to forbid my seeing you again."

"If you don't keep your promise, I shall execute my threat."

"I am awfully desperate, Polly."

"A little more ventilation, Tommy," she said, pointing to the crank with which the roof of the glass-house was raised.

Ken-Lake promptly complied with the request, and returning to his seat, said with a sigh:

"I am jolly well all in, Polly."

"What's become of your life's work?" asked Polly deridingly. "I knew you wouldn't stick it out. You lack application. You Englishmen of the counties are all alike. You are *anachronisme*."

"I'm tremendously keen on Imperial Federation," he protested.

"I'll lay to-morrow's *boutonnière* against a package of cigarettes, that you did nothing for the cause while you were in London."

"You lose," he replied spiritedly. "I attended conferences all day yesterday."

"Talk, talk, talk! That's not doing anything real," she reproached.

"Something is going to happen soon," said Ken-Lake in self-defence.

"Another conference, I suppose."

"Rome wasn't built in a day," he protested.

"More appropriately: Rome wasn't destroyed in a day," she corrected.

"You are awfully down on Federation."

"Think so?" asked Polly, bringing the sprinkler dangerously near the hickory-chair. "I must admit that I like discussing the subjects of the day with you. It's sort of elevating for a woman to talk over great issues with a man of politics."

"I say, Polly, be careful. You gave me a drenching," protested Ken-Lake, rising from his chair, and shaking the water from his clothes.

"Oh! Tommy, how careless of me."

"It's nothing," he said, continuing to brush his clothes.

"We are leaving England in a couple of weeks."

Ken-Lake ceased worrying about his clothes. "That's jolly good," he exclaimed.

"I thought you would be sorry," she pouted.

"I am going to Canada about the same time," he explained. "But it's not to be generally known," he cautioned.

"Cross my heart," promised Miss Masson promptly. "Then the big thing is to happen in Canada. Isn't it?" she pressed.

"We are supposed not to talk about those things."

"Of course not," she agreed.

"I was awfully afraid I should be in Canada while you were in England," he continued. "I have been fearing that I should be there and back while you were here all the while, and then I should lose my chance—"

"Remember your promise."

"Canada is out of bounds," he replied; "and we shall both be there soon. By what boat are you sailing?"

"Do you know Mr. Larned?" asked Polly, turning suddenly and facing her neighbour.

"Mr. William Larned of Canada?" he enquired with a start.

"Yes."

"No. Do you?" asked Ken-Lake, and his grey eyes betrayed an unusual interest in the answer.

"He left here this morning," said Miss Masson complacently.

"The Colonial Minister?" he asked, with a perplexed look.

"Yes."

"The deuce, you say!"

"I thought you would be surprised."

"Surprised! Polly, I'm fairly stumped."

"Well, I didn't expect that," admitted Polly.

"Larned here!" he repeated.

"He came for the week-end, and besides—he is interested in us," she said modestly.

"Strange," murmured Ken-Lake.

"I can't see why. We have had several visitors from home since we were in Surrey. Not many, it is true. But Surrey Court is by no means a hermitage."

"That you should be entertaining Larned while I was in London, is a remarkable coincidence."

"I am afraid I can't see it."

Ken-Lake did not press the subject further.

"Mr. Larned is an old school-mate of Allan's. They lived together at Varsity."

"I can't remember having heard you mention his name before."

"Allan hadn't met him for years and years."

"Did he say anything about political changes in Canada?" asked Ken-Lake.

Polly sat on the gardener's bench and, kicking her feet nonchalantly against a post, looked steadily into the clear grey eyes of her neighbour.

"We talked politics," she announced. "A lot of politics," she asserted.

"Then you know all I shouldn't tell you; you know what I am going out to Canada for."

"I suspect I do," she said calmly.

Awfully indiscreet of Larned, thought Ken-Lake to himself. "Strange," he said aloud to Polly.

"I can't see why."

"Tell me your opinion of Larned. Does he size up to the position? Is he a big man?' he asked.

"I should think him about six feet, and weighing perhaps one hundred and seventy—"

"I mean statesmanlike," explained Ken-Lake patiently.

"I can't say," was the honest reply. "Sometimes I thought him big, and then I thought him an opportunist."

"I suspect he is."

"Which?"

"An opportunist."

"I thought you didn't know him."

"I am going on other people's opinions."

"Lord Steeleton's?" she enquired.

Ken-Lake picked a caterpillar from the wall, and threw it gently in the grass-plot beyond the greenhouse.

"And yet you would make him Prime-Minister," she said thoughtfully.

Again Ken-Lake made no reply.

"I suppose you do it because you are yourselves opportunists," she twitted.

"I dare say we are, in a way," admitted Miss Masson's candid neighbour. "It's one thing to have a good cause and another to find a good man who can carry that good cause in the country."

"Is your Mr. Body a good man?" she asked.

"B.B. is beastly practical, and that's what's wanted these days," he assured her. "That's what you are always preaching to me."

"I can't think Mr. Larned will go the full distance," she said reflectively.

"We shan't ask him to go very far at first," volunteered Ken-Lake. "At least, that's the present intention. But, I say, let's chuck politics."

"Why are we never to discuss politics, or rather, why must we always stop discussing politics when the subject becomes interesting? I can't understand you politicians at all," she protested. "You puzzle ordinary folk. I am sure we women are going to find it difficult to obtain information. Apparently, no one wants to tell us anything about the questions of the day. At first Mr. Larned didn't want to talk politics."

"Well, I suspect you made him, as you make me. You are awfully persistent, you know."

"Haven't I a right to be? It's my country that's being plotted for," she answered angrily.

"Don't say that, Polly. It isn't fair, you know. And there isn't an intention, much less a plot, to harm Canada."

Polly tossed her head and impatiently arose from her seat on the gardener's bench.

"Oh, I say, how ripping!" murmured Ken-Lake, gazing in admiration at his neighbour, whose natural charms were heightened by the flush of emotion that passed over her face.

"I know that you think the French-Canadians will be injured by Imperial Federation," said Ken-Lake gently; "but if their interests, as a nationality, are affected, it will be for better, not for worse."

"No, no, no!" insisted Polly, with three tiny stamps of her foot. "We were once swamped by a scheme of Federation. You English people don't know much about it—I mean the Confederation of 1867. After that experience, we are suspicious of all federations. We were swamped," she repeated, "now—we shall be swallowed up."

"You don't understand the plan that is proposed."

"Explain it."

"I'm frightfully sorry, but I can't."

"Oh! It's a secret," she said. "That's too bad."

Ken-Lake smiled. "Are secrets necessarily bad?" he asked.

"I suppose you take awfully long and atrocious oaths not to reveal, and always to conceal. Something like the Free Masons, isn't it?"

"The plan isn't yet definitely decided."

"Then why go to Canada?"

"I'm not going for a fortnight."

Miss Masson looked at her plants in silence and, in absent-mindedness, broke the stem of a grape-vine. "It is coming very soon, and God alone knows the results," she said to herself.

"Polly," he began pleadingly.

"Won't you have luncheon with us?" she asked, relaxing and smiling pleasantly at her neighbour.

"Thanks, awfully. That's jolly good of you—but—Do you know, Polly," Ken-Lake said mournfully, "my life is being constantly wrecked on the edge of the bright spots by those hideous 'buts'."

"We're all in the same boat," she assured him. "But what's your trouble now?" she asked.

"Some friends are motoring from town for luncheon with me."

"Wearing red roses?"

"Federationists," he agreed.

"More talk, talk, talk," she suggested.

"More jawing."

"I saw a motor driving into your place some time ago," said Polly.

Ken-Lake looked hurriedly at his watch.

"I'm off," he said.

CHAPTER THE TENTH

JOEL DIGGS APPEARS WITH A LIMOUSINE

NONE but a discerning detective or a government contractor could have picked the Canadian Minister of Public Works out of the crowd which was surging over Pier No. 53 that lies on the east side of the Hudson River at New York. But within forty-eight seconds after the Honourable William Larned had landed from the *Leviathic,* his right hand had been engulfed in the huge hands of Joel Diggs—and Joel Diggs was not a discerning detective.

"Well, I am glad to see you back," he assured the Minister of Public Works. This *is* a pleasure. "My wife is with me in New York for a few days, and hearing that you were to arrive on the *Leviathic,* says she to me, 'Joel, you go right down to the pier with a car and take Mr. Larned to his hotel.' We are stopping at the Waldorf-Astoria for a few days, Mrs. Diggs and me. Let me take your bag."

"But, Diggs, I am hurrying to make a train connection for Ottawa, and have only a few minutes to spare."

"Well, well, I am sorry, but Grand Central it is then. Mrs. Diggs will be disappointed. We have been counting on having you as our guest at the Waldorf for dinner. But if you can't come, you can't, and that's all there is to it. I'll take you to the station instead of the hotel. My car is right here."

"I had an order sent for a motor car," said Larned, quite untruthfully.

Mr. Diggs' round face expressed disappointment. But the gods were not to frustrate his design. The Minister's secretary had been left behind to argue with the customs' officials and the Minister's eyes failed to find a car for hire on the stand.

"I am afraid," said Larned, looking about vainly, "that orders for my car were not received," and this time he spoke truthfully. "I shall be delighted to take advantage of your offer, Diggs. It appears to be fortunate that you were so considerate; otherwise I might have missed my train."

Larned and the contractor were soon riding up Seventh Avenue on their way to the Grand Central.

"Things have not been going at all right since you left," commenced Mr. Diggs, realising that he had only a few minutes in which to talk to the Minister. "Wicks has been very unreasonable in your absence. I can't get along with him at all."

"He is a very able engineer," suggested the Minister.

"He's an ass," said the contractor.

"Hard pan?" suggested the Minister.

"Did Wicks write to you about our dispute?" indignantly asked Diggs.

"Not a word."

"Well, how on earth did you guess what was the matter?"

"Experience has taught me, Diggs," said the Minister, "that nine times out of ten when a contractor calls an engineer names, there is a dispute as to classification of materials."

Diggs put back his head and laughed uproariously.

"Well, that's clever," said he. "That *is* clever," he repeated with appreciative emphasis, bringing his enormous hand down on Larned's knee in a mighty slap. "I'll tell Mrs. Diggs that one. She always likes me to tell her the clever things you say. I am very sorry you are not going to meet Mrs. Diggs, Mr. Larned. She has been

telling me for years that you will some day be Prime Minister. 'Mark my words, Diggs,' said she to me only the other day, 'Mr. Larned is going to be IT some day soon.' She's a very clever woman, Mr. Larned."

"I believe it," replied the gallant Larned. "But sometimes even clever women go astray when they turn to prophecy. Besides, remind Mrs. Diggs that fortune-telling is against the law."

"I'll tell her, sir," said Diggs, again laughing heartily, while Larned hurriedly covered his knee with his hand. "I tell her all the clever things you say," continued the contractor. "No one appreciates a good thing more than Mrs. Diggs."

"She is devoted to you?" suggested the Minister.

"She is that. And what's more, she's got brains, Mr. Larned. Yes, sir, she's got a wonderful set of brains! I don't understand it, at all; but she'll walk over the work and say to me: 'Joel, you're dropping gold dollars here'; and when the job's done and things balanced up, she's right, always right. No measuring, no counting, no nothing, just seems to come right off the bat, so to speak."

"The subconscious mind," commented Larned.

"Well, I suspect it's something like that. And she's just as quick to light on a soft job. Only the other day we went over a piece of work together—I like taking her along—and when we'd finished, I said: 'Now, come on Maggie, what's the verdict?' I don't mind telling you beforehand, Mr. Larned, it was the best thing I'd had in many a day. Do you know what Mrs. Diggs said about it?" he asked, and without giving the Minister a chance to guess, he continued: "She said, 'We'll be hitting the trail for the Florida east coast this winter, Joel.' That's what she said, Mr. Larned. Now, what do you think of that for snap judgment?"

"Excellent," replied the Minister, joining with the contractor in laughing at Mrs. Diggs' original manner of delivering a verdict.

When the laughter had subsided, Larned turned suddenly to his companion in the limousine.

"Was it a government job, Diggs?" he asked.

"Now, Mr. Larned, who ever heard of making money from the Government these days?" answered the contractor evasively. "You tie a fellow hand and foot by pages of contract with 'whereases' and 'provideds' and keep him tied by penalties and hold-backs to the end. A Government job!" he repeated, in a tone which implied entire impossibility. Then glancing at 39th. Street in anxiety, he continued: "Coming back to Wicks, I must ask you, Mr. Larned, to look into the matter. I can't get him to see things my way at all."

"A very honest man is Wicks."

"And stupid."

"It doesn't necessarily follow," said the Minister.

"I have simply got to have an appointment to take the matter up. All my progress payments are being held back—and the wages have to go on. Yes, sir, the wages have to go on. The working-man must get his on pay day," asserted the virtuous Diggs. "It means thousands to me, and Wicks refuses to be reasonable."

"Perspective."

"Per what?" asked Diggs dubiously.

"The trouble probably lies in the point of view," explained the Minister. "So long as there are honest engineers and contractors there will be differences in eyesight, as to whether material is rock, hard pan, or just plain earth," said the Minister.

"I suppose that's true," said Diggs. "But you will see that I get fair-play, won't you?"

"Certainly, fair-play, and you shouldn't ask for more."

"No. Fair-play is good enough for Diggs. Will you have a cigar, Mr. Larned?"

"No, thank you."

"It's a very good one," said Diggs persuasively, "a Waldorf Astoria Perfecto. I know those ship cigars,

Mr. Larned. Mrs. Diggs and I have travelled abroad, sir. We ran around Europe looking at pictures and things until my wife had headaches and I had backaches. We did the cathedral cities of England; and I tell you I missed my Havanas. The cigars aboard ship and abroad haven't got the flavour. A tobacconist once told me that cigars get sea-sick just like human beings—like me, at any rate. They come out in a cold sweat, sir, when the boat rocks, just like human beings—like me, at any rate," continued the descriptive Diggs. "I guess that's when they lose their flavour. Whatever happens, Havana cigars are no good outside of America, unless it's in Havana. I was never there. Won't you try one, Mr. Larned? If you like it, I'll send you a box."

"Thank you, Diggs. I am cutting down on my cigars," said Larned, again speaking truthfully.

"I am sorry," said Diggs, returning to his pocket the case he had been holding temptingly before Larned. "I'm sorry," he repeated, "for I thought I'd lit upon something you'd like. I remember the cigar you gave me last time I was in your office."

"Not unkindly, I hope."

"Oh, my, no! It was a very good cigar."

"It must have been from my right-hand drawer," said Larned confidently.

"I think it was."

"Remind me if some day I should thoughtlessly offer you one from the left-hand drawer," said Larned. "They are likely to be longer remembered. We politicians have to carry an assortment of cigars," he explained.

"I've been very good to the party, Mr. Larned," said Diggs, quite unappropriately.

"I don't doubt it," replied Larned. "I often wonder how, with such strong sympathies for our side, you managed to get along when the other crowd was in power."

"We are almost at the station," announced Diggs.

Larned looked anxiously at his watch, found that he had but a few minutes to spare. The two men rushed for the gate, Diggs carrying the hand-bag.

"I have the papers setting forth the facts of my case. I suppose you wouldn't like to read them on the train?" asked Diggs doubtfully.

"Better leave them until you are at my office in Ottawa."

"I am sorry that I can't go to Ottawa with you," and the voice of the contractor invited persuasion.

"Good-bye, Diggs."

"I'll be in Ottawa soon," replied Diggs, again engulfing the Minister's hand in his own and giving it a prolonged shake.

"I'm grateful to you for the motor-car, and please express my thanks to Mrs. Diggs for her thoughtful suggestion. Bring her with you to Ottawa," added the Minister impulsively.

"Good-bye, Mr. Larned."

"Good-bye, Diggs."

"She's a clever woman, a mighty clever woman," soliloquised Diggs, as alone in his limousine he was carried back to the 'Waldorf-Astoria'. 'He may think you forward, Joel; he may think you vulgar, and so you are; but he'll remember you, that's the main thing; and he'll think you have a big heart, and so you have, Joel,' she said. Now, I'll bet fifty dollars against a hard-boiled egg that the first day I go to Ottawa I'll get an interview with the Minister of Public Works, and all for the cost of this little trip. And if it hadn't been for Maggie's brains, I'd have been kicking my heels against the outer office of the Minister of Public Works for a week. But offering that cigar," said he, counting his hand as do several card-players I know, "was a bone-head play. He's a hard man to make out. He'll offer you a cigar, but he won't take one. Maggie was right. 'Don't, Joel, whatever you do, don't offer him a cigar. He won't take it; not if I know him', she said. But I thought I knew better, for ship

cigars *are* bad, and Mr. Larned *is* a good judge of tobacco. She is an uncanny, clever woman," concluded Diggs, as the limousine reached the porticoed entrance of the 'Waldorf-Astoria'.

. . . . . .

"Your bag, sir," said Hawkins, stopping Larned in a head-long rush for the train.

"What brought you to New York, Hawkins?"

"I brought the *Thelma* down to take you back to Ottawa."

"Very well."

And as Larned was preparing for dinner in the state-room of the *Thelma,* he, too, was soliloquising. "Why was a private car sent to New York for me?" he asked himself. "Someone has been unusually solicitous over my comfort. I wonder what's brewing. What is brewing?" he murmured.

"Dinner, sir? It is ready to be served," said Hawkins, tapping gently on the open door.

"Very well. I'll be ready soon."

"And—"

"Yes, Hawkins."

"Would you fancy a bottle of Beaume Grèves, 1908? I think I could get it, sir; although, you know, since prohibition came in, we are not supposed to serve liquors on Government cars."

"In Canada," suggested the Minister encouragingly.

"In Canada," repeated Hawkins gravely.

"A thoughtful soul, Hawkins," said the Minister, as he gave a final turn to his cravat.

Scarcely had dinner been finished than Hawkins brought in the card of Senator Wickum.

"Are you engaged, sir?"

"No," answered the Minister hesitatingly.

"I am glad to see you back, Mr. Larned," said the Senator, a tall, spare man, with a well-trimmed beard,

turning from red to grey, and eyes that fairly glistened in their keenness. "I can assure you that we in Government circles missed your guiding hand. As a matter of fact, Larned, no one ever knew whose hand was really guiding the ship of state until you went away."

"I hope the good old ship is still on her course," said Larned cheerfully.

"She is a bit out of her reckoning," replied the Senator, "but now you are home, everything will be smooth sailing. By the way, while you were abroad, did you meet my cousin, Sir Frederick Wickum?"

"No. I hadn't that pleasure."

"Nor my cousin, the Honourable Col. Wickens Wickum?"

"No. I was unfortunate enough to miss both of your cousins."

"Col. Wickum is an old East India man, very bluff, but interesting. I am sorry you didn't meet Sir Frederick and Lady Wickum. They have the entré to the smart set in London, and might have been useful to you. It is my fault. I should have written and asked them to see that you were looked after."

"I was busy and had little time for social activities," replied the Minister.

"Yes. I suppose so, but a little of society is a good thing for a busy man. There was a time when I thought only of business; but my wife is keenly interested in society and, of course, we have to keep up with our wives. As an old bachelor, Larned, you don't understand those things," and Senator Wickum laughed at his suggestion. "We had a delightful trip to England last year. The Wickums are one of the good old families of England, Mr. Larned. I remember Sir Frederick saying to me one day, 'Bob, old man, you are one of the few of our name who are un-titled! Of course, Mr. Larned, you understand I am not keen for a title."

"Much too sensible a man to run after baubles," interjected the Minister.

"Yes," said the Senator slowly. "But women are different, and it is a bit awkward for my wife not to share in the family desserts."

"Women like that sort of thing," said the Minister sympathetically.

"They certainly do," agreed the Senator, continuing hurriedly: "The last time I was home my cousin Sir Frederick said to me: 'If you could only get a leg-up from the Canadian Government, the family at home would do the rest.' And I really think the home government would be pleased to honour a Wickum from overseas," commented the Senator. "Proof, you know, of the virility of old stock and that sort of thing," he added.

"I think I remember your having told me years ago that you came to Canada a poor immigrant boy, and worked your way against tremendous odds into fortune. This is the first intimation I have had of your distinguished family connection. I have been regarding you as the first of your line, a self-made man, Senator."

"Quite true, Larned," and Senator Wickum was apparently a bit uncomfortable, "quite true. In my father's time there was a quarrel, and as my father said little about his relations, it was only recently that we discovered our connections. As a matter of fact, found them, upon making official application for a crest."

"Very romantic," said Larned. "You ought to write a book, Senator."

For a moment Senator Wickum stared at the Minister, but failed to find in his face a trace of the facetiousness which he feared his story had excited.

"Mr. Cardstone, of Winnipeg, wishes to know if you are disengaged," announced Hawkins, when the Senator, after a somewhat prolonged discussion of politics, not unmixed with references to the value of knighthoods, had retired.

"Tell Mr. Cardstone I have gone to bed," replied the Minister, and unblushingly he placed his feet over a chair, lighted his pipe, and by way of the files of The Daily Moon (which the politically-knowing Hawkins had provided), sought to find his way back into the life of his chosen profession.

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH

MR. LARNED FINDS SIR HENRY BATEMAN IN DEEP WATERS

THE Minister of Public Works, upon arriving in Ottawa, hastened to the Prime Minister's Office, as requested by a telegram received *en route*. He found Sir Henry Bateman sitting listlessly in the retiring-room of the Privy Council Chamber.

"Larned, I am through. I want you to take over the Government," Sir Henry had said before Larned had taken a chair.

"Your decision comes to me as a shock," replied Larned. "Has something gone wrong, Sir Henry? Are you worried?" he asked anxiously.

"No. Of course, I am not worried," replied Sir Henry. "Can't you see I am worried?" he asked, impatiently and inconsistently. "Everything has gone wrong and, under my hands, is going worse. All sorts of cabals are being formed against me. My colleagues are not all loyal. I can trust no one but you, Larned; and to you alone I willingly turn over the reins of office. I want the thing over as soon as possible."

"And what will become of you and Lady Bateman?"

"We shall retire to London."

"And Lady Bateman? Is she quite satisfied? After all these years in politics, it must be a stiff wrench to sever yourselves from the public life of the country."

"Of course, it is," said Sir Henry. "The man is a fool who makes of politics a career. Larned, there is in politics a virus which enters the soul and destroys it. The politician is unhappy and clings desperately to his unhappiness. He spends himself for power and—spent—is cast into the ash-heap. There is not even a passing regret from the country he has sought to serve. I am through, Larned," and with a nervous little laugh he added, "I crave for

'that repose
The servant of the people never knows'."

"You are worried, Sir Henry," said Larned kindly.

"I am tired, Larned," replied Sir Henry, leaning back in his chair wearily. "Men say I have lost my grip, and rightly, too. Power has passed from my hands."

"You are Prime Minister; power is vested in the first Minister of the people."

"I used to think so, Larned, but it is not true. You are thinking of old days, not of new. We have passed out of Democracy. We are passing into—I know not what. The politician has become a puppet. The press has the power. So long as the influence of the press was divided it was a useful agency. Once it was the bulwark of liberty. But now, like other things that are made to be sold, the newspaper, under the law of the survival of the fittest, has become centralised in few hands, and is a menace to the safety of the State. In the bronze age, the fittest were those who were most muscular in the woods, but we live in the silver age, when the fittest are those who are most cunning in the counting-house."

Sir Henry arose from his chair and restlessly walked the floor.

"The press should not have been left to the ordinary law of supply and demand," he said. "For it is not an ordinary commodity. Upon it, men are dependent for their knowledge of affairs, and through it determine the difference between political rights and wrongs. For years,

the press has been sedulously undermining the confidence of the people in their representatives."

"Who is to blame?" asked Larned, as Sir Henry resumed his chair.

"We are not free from blame. We laughed and applauded as our papers attacked the leaders of the Opposition, and the leaders of the Opposition laughed and applauded as their papers attacked us; and together, laughing and applauding, we have travelled the highway towards destruction."

"But we have the stronger press."

"And thus are in the stronger hands," replied the Prime Minister. "Yes, we are puppets. Why not admit the fact squarely? No sooner do the proprietors of the papers set up their creatures than they proceed to knock them down with no more ceremony than young men throwing balls at wooden heads in the fair-ground. They ridicule us. They say we are weak because we have allowed 'the interests' to form combinations in restraint of trade, and they themselves have centralised their power by a commercial combination that controls competition. They scold us because we are not firm, and they themselves swing with the mob. They want a 'strong government', but they never help in an uphill fight. They cry aloud for unity, and each within its group panders to the lowest and fiercest passions of that group. Circulation is their god. They won't tell their readers what they ought to know; they tell them only what they want them to know; and then bewail the country's dissensions."

"Surely you condemn too generally, Sir Henry."

"Perhaps, Larned; perhaps, but I am tired. The press scolds us for the rise in the cost of living, and paints exaggerated pictures of the rapacity of food-producers and purveyors; and the mob clamours for regulation. The press, with a two-line announcement, doubles the price of its own product, and the mob, unagitated, is silent."

"But, Sir Henry, there are honest editors, just as there are honest clergymen and honest politicians," argued Larned.

"Perhaps, Larned, perhaps," admitted Sir Henry, "but the press is mainly in the hands of men who are not seeking to serve their country's good. If you think otherwise, then pay attention to what they now and then say of each other."

"Certainly at home the *Sun* has not a very high opinion of the *Moon,* and the *Moon* has no better opinion of the *Sun,*" acknowledged Larned.

"Yet you or another who would represent East Badmington can move only along lines laid down by the editor of either paper, and if both should agree upon the same lines, as they now and then do, then you, the representative of the people, are helpless, and should only a few more editors in other parts of the country agree upon the same things, then I, the Prime Minister of the country, the choice of the majority of the representatives of the people, am equally helpless."

Larned sat in silence.

"Do you know, Larned, that not long ago three men were in this office, advising me to do something which I believed not to be in the interest of the country?" Sir Henry asked, and then sat back in his chair and looked at the Minister of Public Works.

"And you refused?"

"I refused."

"Of course."

"Then they said I had to."

"And then you showed them the door?"

"No. That's the strange part of the story," said Sir Henry grimly. "Instead of showing them the door, I did what they demanded, and did it believing it against the best interest of the country. I *had* to. Those three men control newspapers upon which we are dependent. They could have wrecked the Government and brought, as I

firmly believe, worse evil upon the country than were involved in their demands."

Again was Larned silent, while Sir Henry paused.

"Think of it, Larned!" he said, after a time. "So much power in the hands of three men! Were men never so well informed, were motives never so disinterested, it does not matter. The principle is vicious. No three men should have the power to paralyse the hands of a representative government. Under such a condition, there can be no genuine Democracy. No, Larned, I can't see my way out."

"Perhaps, now that I am home, the burden may be divided," said Larned kindly. "I have not been entirely blind to the dangers that have arisen through the centralisation of the press in few hands. Within the last twenty years many newspapers have been crowded to the wall, and some of them—our best. Let me recall the downfall of *The Daily Witness*, and although neither you nor I were of its opinions, I think I am safe in assuming that both of us admired its courage, and its sane reviews of the questions of the day; but, apparently, it was not keen enough in the business office, and keenness in the business office is necessary for a franchise to direct public opinion. Within that twenty years I cannot recall a single daily paper that has succeeded in gaining a permanent footing in this country, although many have tried. As a result, our press has become, as you say, centralised. The progress to centralisation has been accompanied by a widening of the range of activities. The modern newspaper has a religious editorial and preaches not only the politics of its proprietor, but his theology as well. If a man be a clever advertising agent, he may preach anything from socialism to predestination six days in the week, and preach to audiences of a hundred thousand and more each day. There is a deep feeling of dissatisfaction in the country. Soon it will come to the surface."

"It cannot," interrupted Sir Henry, "because it is the newspapers alone which bring things to the surface.

However much they may deride each other, they do not parade the evils of modern journalism. It is their power of concealment I fear as much as their power of misrepresentation.

"You have become a pessimist, Sir Henry. There is a way out, but of that another time. What is the general political situation?"

"The life of this Parliament is almost spent. We are facing an appeal to the country in the midst of great unrest in town and country alike. You may remember, Larned, a few years ago having brought to my attention the feeling of the country in reference to an oleomargarine bill. Then you said our recalcitrant members were but reflecting a graver and more general dissatisfaction. At your suggestion we amended our bill and passed safely over the difficulty. Since then we have met other difficulties, all involving the relations of country to town. By the nature of things in Canada, the farmer cannot be protected, while, little by little, the manufacturers' protection has grown until we have a very high tariff. Ah, those infant industries," said Sir Henry, with a weary smile. "What appetites, what appetites—for infants! But the pith of the thing lies in this: we have to choose now between factory and field. The French-Canadians hold the balance of power, and they are our irreconcilable enemies. We cannot win, unless—"

"Unless—"

"We adopt a radical measure in which the country's unfortunate economic and national differences will be submerged."

"Have you such a policy in mind?"

"One has been suggested," answered the Prime Minister.

"Imperial Federation?" asked Larned.

"Yes."

"I had thought to recommend it, Sir Henry, when I returned. They are apparently strong for it in England,

and I have been assured of support from the Federationists."

"But I will not lead a party which seeks to force Imperial Federation upon Canada."

"And why, Sir Henry? Are you not an Imperialist?" asked Larned in amazement.

"Why?" echoed Sir Henry. "Why?" he repeated. "It is because I am an Imperialist of the Old School, which unselfishly believes in Great Britain. Do you think, Larned, steel rods can bind the humanity of Great Britain? No, sir!" And Sir Henry, rising from his chair, walked the floor in excitement. "No, sir! The past is all against such a view."

"You astonish me, Sir Henry."

"Did you fall under the influence of that cracked-brained Body while you were in London?" Sir Henry asked, looking at Larned suspiciously.

"I met no one by that name."

"I should have warned you of his net."

"It is not proposed to interfere with the autonomy of the self-governing dominions."

"Rubbish!"

"But I assure you, Sir Henry, such is not the intention of those back of the movement."

"Have you forgotten the experience of Greece? Read your Grote, man, and you will have a clearer vision of what will happen to Greater Britain. The Greeks began, as we are asked to begin, a confederacy of Free Nations—and ended in centralisation and—disaster. Grote makes of it a long story, Larned; but it is interesting reading. Read it again. There must be authority in all forms of government, and the success of the British Empire has lain in the distribution of authority. We are free and, being free, we are harmonious. Do you mean to tell me, Larned, that in the event of war, all parts of the Empire would contribute as freely under compulsion as they would under freedom? We may compel the individual, but we ought not to compel the State. Australia, for instance, might,

under given circumstances, be opposed to conscription, even were it the law of the Empire. Tell me, Larned," and Sir Henry lowered his voice, "what is the result when a State refuses to abide by the voice of authority? Do you know what it is?" he asked. "Rebellion," he answered. "Rebellion," repeated Sir Henry. "Yes, sir," and Sir Henry, raising his voice, pounded the table. "I am opposed to defining the relation of the different parts of the Empire by commas and the crossing of t's. The Empire *is* simply because it is the will of the people. The first s-h-a-l-l that is written into a league of free nations, spells the destruction of national freedom."

"I must confess I have not examined the question very closely," answered Larned. "The subject was repeatedly brought to my attention in London, and it appeared to be a policy which could carry us in the next election over the conflict between factory and field."

"You are perfectly right. I know that as well as you. But think of the cost, man! I am not willing to purchase power in Canada at the price of the destruction of Britain."

"Have you studied the Roman parallel? Much of it is made by the Imperial Federationists," suggested Larned.

"I have studied it and studied it carefully, Larned. At times, I know, you have condemned me as impracticable. It is true I have not devoted as much time as you thought I ought to deputations which have come to us. Nor have I gone into the country and met the people as I should have liked. I confess I have not been as practical a politician as is apparently required in these practical days; but I have foreseen the present situation and sought in my library to become acquainted with the parallels furnished by history. You will remember, Larned, that the outstanding cause of the failure of the Roman Empire was the swamping of the old Romans by admission of the colonials to equal authority in administration. When the Goths and Vandals and all the men who had become free citizens within the Empire took the administration into

their hands, the policy of the old Romans was abandoned for modernism, if we may call it such, and insensibly the great Roman Empire drifted to destruction. There was decay at home, it is true. But I maintain that it was the admission of the men from overseas and from beyond the frontiers which wrecked the Empire. Remember Alaric —Odovacar—Theodoric—all colonials. It was they who destroyed the Roman Empire. History will repeat itself, Larned, for men are now moved by the same motives that moved men in the days which followed the great Cæsars."

"The Imperialists apparently turn other pages of Roman history, Sir Henry. Certainly they have not arrived at your conclusions."

"Are we Canadians to have a voice in the administration of India?" asked Sir Henry. "Can we who think only in terms of dollars, assume to help regulate the affairs of millions who care little or nothing for dollars?"

"It may be that we shall have nothing to do with India."

"Nonsense. If we are to be partly responsible for the peace of the Empire, we must take a hand in each Imperial problem. Our voice will not strengthen that of the Mother Country: it will weaken it. It may be that the men of the United Kingdom are growing less able to administer, and that the end is in sight. I hope not. But the end will come the quicker by the admission of our untrained hands, and those of Australia and South Africa as well, in the work of Imperial administration. These are things you must ponder well, Larned, for you will soon have to decide them for yourself. As for me, I am out."

"We have men who will compare favourably with those in the Old Country."

"Some."

"Yes. I will admit there are only a few. Few here and few over there," said Larned. "All too few."

"Few! I should think so," said Sir Henry indignantly. "You will only realise how few when you are in my place,

Larned. You will have the devil's own time in selecting fifteen men of outstanding ability who are willing to serve a people who have confused reason and prejudice; and are content to make their decisions upon the affirmations of the press."

"Do you not think that there are men who, having no desire for Canadian politics, would be willing to enter the wider sphere?" asked Larned.

"I do not."

"That has always seemed to me a probability."

"And to me an improbability. I tell you, Larned, the country is money-mad. We have had neither inclination nor opportunity for knowledge of world-politics. There are few men who ever get beneath the surface of our own politics and fewer who are competent to lay down policies for the Empire."

"They are few in the Old Country," repeated Mr. Larned.

"Then God help the Empire! For Canada cannot," said the Prime Minister.

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH

LADY BATEMAN AND MR. LARNED DISCUSS THE SITUATION

"MR. LARNED!"

"Lady Bateman!"

"I had not expected you to call upon me so soon after your arrival, Mr. Larned."

"I have come for an old-time chat."

"That is impossible."

"And pray, why?"

"These are not old times," replied Lady Bateman sadly.

"For old friends?" he urged.

"You enjoyed your visit to London?" she asked.

"It was an interesting new world to me," he replied; "but it seemed to be moved much after the manner of the one at home."

"And you felt at home?" she suggested.

"Quite. But allow me to talk of something which is nearer my heart, Lady Bateman. I have had your friendship and your confidence in the past. Both are now apparently withdrawn. I am not conscious of having done anything to deserve it."

"What should I have done?" she asked impatiently. "Offered you my hand?"

"Yes," said the Minister of Public Works, gravely taking Lady Bateman's hand and pressing it to his lips. "And now you must tell me, with the frankness of an old friend, why you have treated me, a friend, as a stranger."

"Sir Henry has told you of his resolve to retire?"

"Yes, I come to you from Sir Henry's office."

"And the cause?" she added. "He told you that?"

"Yes."

"And of his desire that you should be his successor?"

"Yes."

Lady Bateman's thin lips tightened. "You have my congratulations," she said coldly.

"But I have not accepted."

"Have not accepted?" Lady Bateman repeated in a voice that carried no emotion. "You intend to accept?" she added.

"I have less intention since my visit to you, Lady Bateman. I am not insensible that the preferment I have received has been largely due to your interest in my behalf. You have been, may I say, my guardian angel, and I do not propose to accept further preferment except upon your advice and under your continued protection."

Lady Bateman scrutinised Larned's face. She had thought she knew his voice and knew its every range of sentiment. But there was a something in Larned's voice now that was strange. "What was it?" she asked herself, and then she asked aloud: "Have I done you an injustice?"

"I can't say until I know all the circumstances, but I think it is altogether likely."

"Mr. Larned, you must know what people are saying about Sir Henry: that he is not strong enough to continue at the head of the Administration. They have not said *that* without instigation. 'We need a man of iron,' they have whispered in clubs and chattered in drawing-rooms, and invariably they have concluded: 'We need Larned.' Am I wrong in thinking that you knew?"

"Entirely wrong, if you mean that I have inspired the answer, or that I have instigated a cabal against Sir Henry, or that I knew of its existence."

"Sir Henry assured me that you were not a party to the intrigue, but I did not believe him," said Lady Bateman. "We had evidence that others within the Cabinet were conspiring to depose Sir Henry, but we did not care for them," she said contemptuously. "But you, Mr. Larned—ah, that was different!"

"Naturally, because you are my guardian angel," answered Larned.

"We have been betrayed," she said bitterly, "and do not know whom to trust. We have been worried, and so worried—so many sleepless nights. At times it did not seem worth while to go on living. If—I have done—you —an injustice—"

"If?" chided Larned.

"I would not be unjust."

"A guardian angel could not be unjust," said Larned, "at least, not a well-informed guardian angel," he added with a smile. "May we not be seated, Lady Bateman? I have much to say."

Lady Bateman motioned Larned to a chair, and seated herself.

"You have given me my favourite chair," he said, and added hopefully: "We are now going to talk as friends."

Lady Bateman sat with strained figure, looking intently at Larned, as if prepared to doubt his words.

"I think you have told me what I wanted to know," he began; "and, frankly, you have told me what I had feared since my conversation with Sir Henry this morning. Allow me to state my case. I shan't be long. If, for personal reasons, Sir Henry had wished to retire, I should have felt honoured in assuming his place. I may confess that it has been my ambition some day to succeed Sir Henry, but only when Sir Henry was freely willing to resign office. I find now that Sir Henry is being forced out, and I cannot see my way to become his successor. I have followed Sir Henry's leadership because I have respected his judgment. I have not thought as deeply as

he on public questions; my time and energy and such ability as I have, were all directed to making his policies acceptable in the country. And, accepting his judgment, I have believed those policies in the country's interest. With me, politics has been a game, and may I say I have played it as such. If I have not always played the game fairly, it has been my excuse that one of the rules was to match an opponent. It has never been within my code to betray a leader. Years ago, I was accused of betraying first Dobbins and then McMichael."

Lady Bateman, looking into the grate-fire, smiled in reminiscence of the incident, with which she was familiar.

"Both accusations were untrue," he protested, "and yet I did not deny them. In the folly of youth, I enjoyed the reputation of having done what I was accused of doing. Immature then, I preferred that men should think me clever, rather than sincere. I did not contradict the accusations made against me. I respected the reputation of my head more than that of my heart. I have learned many things since then. But I fear I am boring you," he said anxiously.

"Not at all," she replied.

"My mind is made. I cannot lead a party, the policy of which has not the full support of Sir Henry Bateman and the sympathy of Lady Bateman."

Larned paused and looked at Lady Bateman expectantly.

"I am glad you have come to me," she said. "My intuition told me you were loyal, but treachery appeared so general that I lost confidence in everyone—and, worst of all, lost confidence in my own judgment. You will never know what your words mean to me," she continued. "Already the ground seems more secure. But Sir Henry has definitely decided to retire. Of course, an end had to come to his career. We ought to have known that, and I suppose—in a way we did. We *know* it now. We have gone through the pangs that appear to be inevitable when a man in public life lets go, and neither of us has any

disposition to suffer at some future day, as we have suffered these past several weeks."

"I wish I had known this before," he replied earnestly. "I know I could have"—and he paused as if undecided. "Things would have gone differently if I had been at home," he said. "But let the past be past and, if possible, be forgotten. Let us now think of what shall be done. There are apparently two things in public life which must be considered, principle and party. Of course, I would not imply that the two are incompatible," he said with a smile. "But they may at least be thought of separately—principle and party. A few weeks ago I should have reversed the order; for it has been my maxim to take care of the party, thinking that principles would take care of themselves. I have believed only in policy as a thing with which to win. It has seemed to me that free-trade and protection, federation and stand-pat-ism, and all the other things that divide men within our country, were mere cards in a game. But I have changed my mind."

"You are older, Mr. Larned," said Lady Bateman. "We are all growing older."

"It is that thought which reconciles me to my increasing allowance of grey hairs, Lady Bateman."

"Grey hairs are becoming—to you," she told him.

"I *am* older," he confessed with a grave smile.

"Almost—forty," said Lady Bateman, wistfully. "Almost—forty," she repeated, thinking no longer of Larned, but of a woman who, twenty years ago, had felt the joyous pulsation of youth and, entering the threshold of power, saw not the day of stepping-down.

"On my voyage from Liverpool I had time for speculation as to the real purpose of life," continued Larned. "Of course, in a way, I have always known that there is something above power, but I am conscious of having preferred power. You are smiling at me, Lady Bateman."

"Not at all, Mr. Larned. But, frankly, I feel I must pinch myself to find out whether I am asleep or awake. It is not like you to talk in this strain."

"I hope I am not pedantic?"

"Not pedantic; but not like your old self," she said.

"I am still too new a convert to the idea of principle first, not to remember that there is party, and that to it I have an obligation. I have no love for the other crowd. I have no confidence that the men in it are working with higher motives than I had. They are trying to remove us from the board even as we tried to checkmate them. May I ask two or three questions, Lady Bateman, and rely upon our old friendship not to be considered impertinent?"

"Certainly," she assured him.

"Have you and Sir Henry a desire to go to London?" he asked.

"Yes, Mr. Larned."

"May I ask why?"

"We do not care to live in Canada under a Conservative administration with which Sir Henry is not in sympathy."

"Has Sir Henry a desire to enter the House of Lords?"

"He refused that honour a year ago, and again a week ago. He strongly holds that hereditary titles are out of place on the American Continent."

For a moment Larned stared at the mantlepiece in silence, and then he said, "I was told otherwise."

"By whom?" asked Lady Bateman sharply.

"Will you pardon me if I ask you not to press for an answer just now? I have my reasons and you may trust my judgment and—my loyalty. There is something else. May I ask that Sir Henry leave his resignation in abeyance until I have made a trip across the Continent?"

"Sir Henry's mind is unalterable. He intends to resign, and it is his wish that you be his successor. I think it is also mine—now," she said slowly.

"Perhaps, some day," he replied, smiling at Lady Bateman's frank hesitancy. "Not now. For the good of the party which Sir Henry and I have served and at one time loved alike, I want to ask that he remain in office without any indication of a change for six weeks longer."

Lady Bateman thought for a time. She looked at Larned and felt a return of her old confidence. She saw him as she had seen him in the first days of their friendship.

"It will be a sacrifice to delay," she said. "At first I dreaded the day of—the resignation. I could see its horrid details in my sleepless nights. I could even read the formally sympathetic editorials of the Government press and the fiendish sarcasm of the Opposition. I could hear the applause for the new leader. And I dreaded that day. But it's all over. I have gone through it a thousand times. I have rehearsed my part; I know my lines. It is now a sacrifice to delay." Lady Bateman spoke slowly and with bitterness.

Larned's heart went out in sympathy for this woman who had coldly and skilfully played the game, and lost because she had played against the inexorable demands of Time. Once he had regarded her as all-powerful. Then he had admired her. In the hour of her trouble, he felt for her a deep affection.

"We have been good friends," she continued thoughtfully. "I have helped you, Mr. Larned. You may not really think so."

"I know it," he said emphatically.

"And you have helped Sir Henry," she continued. "It is your acumen which has deferred the day that is at hand. Now that I find it can be still further deferred, I find myself longing for it. Women are curious creatures, aren't they, Mr. Larned?" she asked, smiling sadly.

"I think I understand," he said sympathetically. "It will be a sacrifice, but not your first sacrifice, nor Sir Henry's first for the party. Will you make it for me—will you make it for the party?" he pleaded.

"I am sure Sir Henry will agree to your request," she said.

"Thank you, Lady Bateman."

"It is my tea hour, and I know you will desert more important matters to take a cup of tea with me. I drink it alone now quite frequently," and Lady Bateman laughed, but there was no merriment in her voice.

"A cup of tea! That will be delightful," he exclaimed. "I haven't had a good cup of tea since I left Surrey."

"Surrey?" she questioned.

"England, I mean. The tea served on the ship was not good."

"The liners cater for the Americans," she said. "Clever as they are, they have never learned the difference between a good and a bad cup of tea. I presume you have noticed that for some time *'The Moon'* has been studiously indifferent to the progress of Mr. Larned's political career," she continued.

"I have, Lady Bateman," was the answer. "It was good of someone to have remembered my slice of lemon," he added.

"You are never mentioned editorially in *'The Moon'* nowadays," continued Lady Bateman, "and your name is rarely found in its news columns. Last session your speeches were given scant reporting, and were at times garbled. Do you know the cause?"

"I had attributed it to the refusal of my Department to allow *'The Moon'* an advertising rate greater than it charges the vendors of bonbons and patent medicines," replied Larned.

"I am surprised that a man of your discernment has succeeded in finding only half the reason. Within the past several months—but, of course, you have been away most of the time—*'The Moon'* has given your colleague, the Honourable Mr. Rooks, columns and columns of puffery."

"Rooks is an aggressive man," he suggested.

"A mediocrity."

"Therefore, harmless."

"Printers' ink may disguise mediocrity," advised Lady Bateman; "may even dress it for the public as abundant virtue. Need I warn you, Mr. Larned, beware of mediocrity? It has a magnetism for the press. Do you not know that the Honourable Mr. Rooks recently made an extensive speaking-tour at the expense of *'The Moon'* and its coterie, and *not* at Sir Henry's request?"

"May I ask the source of your information?"

"It is given unto angels to peer more deeply into the depths than mere mortals, otherwise mortals would not require guardian angels," replied Lady Bateman smilingly. "Do you know why *'The Moon'* is fond of the Honourable Mr. Rooks?" she asked.

"I have an opinion, but am more anxious to hear yours than to express mine."

"He moves when *'The Moon'* pulls the racial strings," answered Lady Bateman, and Larned thought of Sir Henry's statement that politicians were mere puppets in the hands of the press.

"We are a sort of Punch and Judy show, after all," he laughed. "And I can't be made to kick hard enough with the right foot."

"If you value *'The Moon's* support, I advise you to pay more heed to the shortcomings of French-Canadians. In adroit hands they are a valuable political asset."

"Some people thought my speech on the subject last spring much too strong," he replied.

"Another cup, Mr. Larned?"

"May I ask you to add a little water to this one? I lost my taste for strong tea in Surrey," he said.

"In Surrey?" she questioned, with puzzled face.

"In England," he explained.

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH

LADY CASTLEMAN GIVES MR. LARNED A LIFT

LARNED did not like Lady Castleman. Most people disliked Lady Castleman, and yet there were few who avoided her, and some who eagerly sought her society. Lady Castleman's tongue was long, and almost invariably disagreeable when talking about people, but at times highly convenient when talking to them. For Lady Castleman had an uncanny faculty for news; the sort of news that is valuable to the politician and rarely finds its way into print. Disliking Lady Castleman, most people within the hundred and twenty that make up the political society of Canada's capital, invited her to their affairs. Not that they were afraid to leave her uninvited (not all of them, at any rate), but Sir Herbert Castleman had once been a Minister of the Crown, and then Lady Castleman had gone "everywhere". By force of habit, the doors of "almost everywhere" remained open to her. Larned cared nothing for the value of her news, and upon leaving the Bateman residence would have gladly declined her offer of "a lift" to his office. But the landaulette had stopped at the curb; the chauffeur had dismounted and opened the door, and Lady Castleman had refused to accept his excuse that he needed the exercise.

"I am trying to take off weight," he explained, reluctantly taking a seat at her side.

"As I saw you ahead of me on the street, I was thinking how well you had preserved your figure, Mr. Larned. It's good to see you home again, and to find you quite unchanged."

"You wouldn't have expected me to change during a few weeks' absence," he laughed.

"People age quickly in London; at least Colonials do when they try to go its political pace. But, of course, you are yet young, and can stand it. You must remember I knew your dear mother. I declare you are not a day over thirty-six—and that's pretty young to become Prime Minister of Canada. We are expecting the announcement any day. I'm awfully pleased, and I know dear Sir Herbert would have been delighted. I suppose you have heard the story of how Bateman became Prime Minister?"

"I haven't heard it."

"Well, it's quite a long story, and I can't tell it now, but by rights it should have gone to Sir Herbert. He was, by far, the stronger man. For years he carried the Administration. It was he who steered them through their troubles. He had brains, and would have been Prime Minister if it had not been for the intrigues of a certain party whose name I shall not mention. Sir Herbert was never the same afterwards. I often think he died of a broken heart. Although, to be sure, some people thought Sir Herbert hadn't a heart."

As Sir Herbert Castleman had died before Larned's day in Parliament, the subject was not particularly interesting to him. He thought only of his own powers of endurance, and would willingly have paid the fine had Lady Castleman's chauffeur recklessly broken the municipal speed regulations.

"Sir Herbert is well spoken of," he said politely. "I have read his speeches in *Hansard*. He made some capital ones on the Budget."

"Indeed, yes, I suppose he did. But you know I never interfered in my husband's political affairs. I made up my mind at the beginning that his wife's tongue should never get him into trouble, and it never did. I am not a *modern;* I don't care what anyone says, politics is not a woman's business. Do you know, that's partly the

cause of the Bateman downfall? Kate could never keep her fingers out of poor Sir Henry's pie. And, of course, she messed it all up. Poor Sir Henry! The Lord never gave him a decent share of brains, and when He tied Kate Macleod to him, He took from him the advantage of the little He had given."

"I like Lady Bateman," asserted Larned rather hotly, in spite of a determination not to be drawn. He looked out of the motor-car and wondered if he dare ask to be set down at a butcher's shop they were approaching.

"Of course, you would say that. Everyone did say that. Remember, my dear, I know what they say of you when you're in, and I know what they say of you when you're out. I have been in politics and I have been out of politics, and I tell you there won't be many tears shed when the Batemans leave."

"I know one who will be sorry when Sir Henry leaves office."

"Of course, you've got to say that. It's diplomatic and all that sort of thing. It does credit to your political sense, and everyone knows you're a natural born politician. But I tell you, frankly, that Kate Bateman isn't a friend of yours. I happen to know that. And I know what she said about you to her most intimate friend, who, as it happens, is my most intimate friend. Of course, it wouldn't do to repeat it. That would be gossipping and I despise a gossip. But I don't mind saying that what Kate said of you was not at all complimentary."

Larned steadied himself against the side of the car and, sorely tempted, refused to trust himself in speech.

"Did you enjoy your visit to Surrey, Mr. Larned?" she asked suddenly.

The Minister looked at Lady Castleman, concealing his surprise at her knowledge of his movements while abroad.

"Very much," he said.

"When I heard you had visited the Mowbrays, I said you would enjoy it—for a week-end."

"London became monotonous. It was stuffy; a breath of fresh air was acceptable."

"You knew Allan Mowbray at college, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"He is a charming chap. I knew his mother; she was a Cathcart. But Allan's not brainy. My, no. Always good-humoured; but then he never does anything, and hasn't any reason to be bad-humoured."

"Was my week-end reported in the society columns?" asked Larned, hoping to draw the source of Lady Castleman's information.

Lady Castleman was willing to be drawn.

"I think not," she said. "I heard it from Mrs. Rooks. She seemed awfully pleased about it. I wonder why she is so interested in your affairs?"

"I wonder how she is so well-informed—and so quickly," said Larned seriously.

"You can never tell—in politics."

"Do you remember when the subject came up?"

"Dear me, yes. It was a week ago to-day. She called upon me and I rather thought for the purpose of telling me that very thing. But why she should think I was interested in your week-end visits, is more than I can understand. But one can never tell—in politics."

"Apparently not," agreed Larned.

"The Mowbrays are a good family. And, for that matter, so are the Massons. But then, of course, they are French, one of the old families; came over with Cartier or Laval or Frontenac, or some of those people. I can never remember who it was, although I have heard often enough. Marie Mowbray insists they were awfully respectable and the family was related to them. Marie is fussy about genealogies. But you can never tell. I know people who have bought their pedigrees ready-made. With a little discretion, it's easy enough to tie on to a perfectly

good tree. I have known Marie and Polly since they were little girls. Marie's the better of the two; awfully serious and churchy, but genuine. She's just the opposite of Allan, and so, of course, they are a perfect match. Polly's a cuttingly sarcastic wretch, always saying something annoying. I declare the last time I met her, at a tea in Montreal, I nearly lost my patience, and you know how patient I am, Mr. Larned. I can stand almost anything, but not the cutting things Polly Masson says. She was decidedly rude to me. I can tell you she wouldn't last long in Ottawa; she would soon have the town at sixes and sevens. She simply wouldn't be tolerated here."

"What's the trouble?" asked Larned, feeling ashamed of his question as soon as he had asked it.

"Well, for one thing, she's got a temper. She flies up and spits fire every time anyone says anything that doesn't suit her. And for another, she's eternally harping on the rights of French-Canadians. It becomes awfully tiresome. Why can't those French-Canadians behave like Christians? But, then, of course, they are Romanists. I won't deny Polly's got brains. Of course, you know that as well as I do. But she hasn't control, and that's what a woman needs."

"I thought her rather good-looking."

"She is, if you like the Latin type, and besides, her figure has come into fashion; but then she's always perfectly dressed. I hear she brings all her clothes out from Paris."

"She has good taste in clothes."

"But think what she must spend on them!"

"Clothes are by no means a matter of money."

"No; but money is helpful to taste."

"She has beautiful hair," said Larned, remembering the last moments of his visit to Surrey Court, and of a white rose he had placed in Polly's hair.

"She has a clever maid," said Lady Castleman.

Larned laughed softly and bowed to an acquaintance whom they were passing on the street.

"I hear the Batemans are looking for a house in Montreal," said Lady Castleman. "I wonder if they will go to Westmount. I know a place that would just suit them. It will be vacant in a month. Do you think that would be too soon?"

"Westmount is filling up very rapidly," said Larned.

"The house is on the mountain-side, with an awfully good view. Would you care to speak to them about it?"

"I'd rather not."

"Perhaps, after all, it would be a delicate subject for *you* to broach to *them*. I am told the Rooks are taking the old Redmond place in Ottawa. They must be intending to entertain on a large scale, but really I can't see what they want to entertain for. But, of course, nobody ever really knows anybody else's business. And yet it may be— I suppose you have heard that Rooks' name has been mentioned."

"You must remember I have just returned and am out of touch with politics," said Larned.

"Oh, he's been mentioned," assured Lady Castleman, "and in quite serious quarters."

"Yes."

"He's ambitious."

"Most Ministers are suspected of being ambitious."

"You haven't had time to look into the corners."

"Not yet," said Larned.

"You ought to search them. I assure you there is something there worth the finding. And if you want a hint, perhaps I'll give you one. Rooks is going to have support. I wonder if taking the Redmond house has anything to do with his aspirations."

"I have just returned," Larned reminded her.

"Of course. I always forget that. He'll have support," she repeated, "but not from the right crowd. He'll have

all those goody-goody people; the dry crowd. He won't have our crowd; you'll have its support, Mr. Larned. By the way, you mustn't keep yourself shut in. You can't afford to live the life of a recluse."

"The Lord knows I'm not shut in," said Larned. "I've just travelled across the Atlantic. It seems to me I'm always travelling. I wish that someone would shut me in my office, lock the door, throw away the key, and not find it until I had caught up with my correspondence."

"I mean shut in socially," explained Lady Castleman. "Remember, there is a contact between the social and the political worlds. Remember that, no matter how much we may regret it, women have an influence in politics. You'll have to entertain, you know, when you become Prime Minister. I suppose you'll bring your mother to Ottawa. It will just about kill her, poor dear! She isn't used to Ottawa ways—and the Lord knows they are open to criticism. Too much back-biting. You old bachelors are going to have a hard time of it."

"I think you are right, Lady Castleman. We shall have to mend our ways. But it may be too late."

"I am giving a tea next week," she continued, "and I want you to come. You will, won't you? Promise me. My niece is coming for a visit and I want you to meet her. Her father was dear Sir Herbert's brother, who died some years ago, leaving her more than comfortably off, even for these extravagant times. The poor girl has no parents, no brothers, no sisters, and has been wandering around the world to kill time. She's clever, and not sarcastic, and she's not a bit talkative like I am. She's as good-looking as she's rich, and as sweet-tempered as she's good-looking. I know you will like her; I've set my mind upon your liking her."

"I'm sure I should not dislike your niece, Lady Castleman, even if she had only her kinship to recommend her."

"That's sweet of you, and I hope you mean it, but you must remember I know politicians. They are awfully insincere; but you will come, won't you?"

"I'll go to your tea, with pleasure, Lady Castleman, if I'm in town."

"Now, see that you keep your promise. Dear Sir Herbert used to say politicians' promises were given to be broken or kept as the day required. But you know I haven't asked you to do anything before, and I feel sure you will come if you are in town. And now that's over," said Lady Castleman with an air of relief. "Tell me, how is Kate looking? I haven't seen her for an age; we are always missing each other."

"I thought Lady Bateman looked exceedingly well this afternoon."

"It's her pride that's keeping her up. I know her like a book. She isn't feeling exceedingly well, I warrant you that. She's feeling quite the contrary. We were girls together, and I never knew anyone who could disguise her feelings like Kate Macleod. She was always a climber, and when she became Lady Bateman she became a meddler."

"I wish you wouldn't say anything against Lady Bateman," pleaded Larned. "She has been awfully good to me. She is my friend, and I admire her tremendously."

"No, I suppose I shouldn't, but nobody minds what I say. I am always outspoken, and besides, to give Kate her due, she has her strong points. She's been good to her friends. But, my, she is bitter to her enemies. Some day I'll tell you how Sir Herbert got cheated out of the premiership. I've forgiven all she did then, years ago, but I can't forgive what she said about you. I've a mind to tell you, after all."

"I'd rather you didn't," said Larned firmly.

"Perhaps it's better not," said Lady Castleman regretfully. "I wouldn't for all the world have anything I had repeated turn you against the Batemans. The Lord

knows they are going to need the few friends they have left."

"This is a new car, isn't it, Lady Castleman? I can't remember having seen it before. It runs very quietly, doesn't it?"

"Yes, it's a dear little town car. A present from my niece, poor girl. Sometimes she doesn't know what to do with her money, and fortunately she spends some of it on me. She's got a sweet disposition. I do hope you will come to my tea, Mr. Larned."

"I suppose you are looking forward to a busy season this winter, Lady Castleman."

"That reminds me, Mr. Larned. You must really be more sympathetic. Bob Wickum tells me you were very stand-offish when he asked for your assistance towards a title."

"Do you think it deserved?"

"Really, Mr. Larned, you surprise me. You ought to know better than I how much he contributes to the party funds, but perhaps you don't know. I told him to pin himself to Howell; but really you might have been a little more friendly. He'll get it, anyway. They always do if they stick at it long enough, and you might as well share in the credit."

"The Senator says it is his wife who is anxious."

The old lady laughed softly. "It's always the women, isn't it? And never the men! Fiddlesticks!"

The landaulette passed through the gates leading to Parliament Hill.

"You've been awfully kind to me, Lady Castleman. But I have changed my mind. Instead of going direct to my office, I want to call at the telegraph office. Perhaps you will be good enough to have me taken there. It's on your way home."

"Certainly, my dear," said the old lady, evidently pleased with Larned's appreciation, and ordering the car as requested. "I'm going to be a friend," she continued,

speaking softly and rapidly into Larned's ear. "I'm going to keep you well advised. You must remember I knew your dear mother. You're going to need all the help you can get. You mustn't be foolish. But, of course, you won't be; you are too sensible and too clever a politician. You must deal with this French-Canadian situation with a firm hand. And you will come to my tea, like a dear?"

"I think I'm going to need your assistance," said Larned seriously, "and I am going to your tea—if I'm in town, and if not, I'm going to ask for an invitation to your next tea."

"If you but say so, I'll give a tea, just for you—and my niece," she said with a burst of enthusiasm.

* * * * * *

"Watson," said Larned to the local manager of the cable company, when he was in the private office, "I wish you would cable your people asking them to mail you at once all the messages sent by my secretary while I was in London. Several signatures may have been used. Have them all sent. Something has gone astray which I want to trace."

"Not our fault, I hope."

"No, no, not your fault. I haven't copies of everything. That's all. If I should not be in town when they arrive, keep them until my return. Don't send them to the office. It's rather important, and confidential."

"I shan't forget, Mr. Larned. Government matters are always given special care. You may depend upon my discretion. We are glad you are home again. And I hope there is truth in the rumour that you are moving up."

CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH

ON THE WAY WEST

PROMPTNESS was one of Larned's virtues. With him, to have planned was to act. That the work in hand might not be to his liking, never caused him to delay. He scorned the old adage about not troubling trouble. Habitually he found fault with the old adages. "Hug trouble," he is reported to have advised a friend who consulted him upon a delicate matter which possessed certain elements of danger. And this principle he applied to all his undertakings, agreeable and disagreeable alike. Upon receiving Lady Bateman's assurance that Sir Henry would for some weeks continue in office, Larned immediately set about making preparations for the trip to the Western Provinces. Throughout that night the lights burned in the room of the Minister of Public Works, and at daybreak a tired Minister and a more tired secretary left to catch a few hours' sleep. At the usual hour the Minister, smiling and clean-shaven, sat in his usual seat at the breakfast-table and, eating the usual breakfast, left at the usual hour for the office. Telegrams were dispatched to the district leaders, naming times and places of meeting; so many minutes would be required with one man and so many hours with another; and when these had been arranged, all were compiled into a single schedule. Without miscarriage of plans, the trip would be completed within three weeks.

Within twenty-four hours after Larned bade Lady Bateman goodbye, he was in the private car *Thelma,*

rapidly travelling the great hinterland of Middle Canada on the way to the prairies.

"Yes, sir!" said Hawkins, as he stood at Larned's side at dinner.

"Yes, about what, Hawkins?"

"Someone is trying to manufacture evidence against us, sir, for I found a bottle of Beaume-Graves, 1908, hidden away in the locker."

"I will destroy the evidence, Hawkins."

"Yes, sir."

"Hawkins should have been a practical politician," thought Larned, as he drank his favourite wine.

After dinner the Minister was restless. He was tired. At an intermediate station he had received a Badmington newspaper, and on scanning its column of steamship arrivals apparently had not found anything to his liking. He had tried to become immersed in a modern day political novel, and, failing he picked up a newspaper and made for the body of the train. He had decided upon resting his mind in company, and hoped to find relief from his own thoughts by listening to those of others. Looking into the smoking-compartments of several cars, he found what he was after in the compartment of the third car from his own, and occupied its one vacant seat.

"We have to get back to plain living," an old gentleman who sat in the corner was saying; "back to milk and porridge, and it is not a bad diet. Our grandfathers used to live upon it, but our grandchildren turn up their noses at porridge and will take milk only in the shape of cream when frozen and packed in biscuit cones. Back to milk and porridge: that's my plan for paying off the country's indebtedness."

"There is not much to that," said a bullet-headed man, sprawling in the compartment's one chair, and puffing at an atrociously fat and badly-smelling cigar. "A man

should take all he can get and spend all he can take. The money going round is what makes times good."

"A country becomes really strong only on its savings," replied the old gentleman; "and that means upon its capital. We have borrowed capital, we have to pay interest on capital, and we have to pay back capital. We can do it only out of the savings of the people."

"There is not much chance to save in the city," interjected a little man, apparently a salesman of the less-successful type. "By the time I've paid rent and found food and clothes for the missus and the kids, there is nothing left for the savings bank. It's close shaving all the time to make ends meet. Food is so high," he added.

"And is going to be higher," insisted the old gentleman, "if the cities continue growing at the expense of the country."

"Well, I don't know what I'll do then," replied the other.

"I know what we'll do," said the man with the cigar; "we'll have the union ask for more money: that's what we'll do. And what's more, we'll get it. We always do."

"Where does the money come from?" asked the old gentleman.

"From the boss."

"And where does the boss get it?"

"I should worry!" and with this nonchalant comment the man in the chair threw away his cigar and lighted a fresh one, which for the moment burned with less noisome odour. "I suppose he raises the prices," he added, after a moment's reflection.

"That's the point," cried the old gentleman. "And how is he able to raise his prices?"

"Because the people want his goods."

"Accepted, if you will add to that: because the Government forbids us to buy goods made elsewhere."

"I don't hold with governments," observed the cigar-smoker.

"If we do not pay the bosses' prices so that you may have higher wages and shorter hours and the boss his usual profits, then we have to lift other goods over a tariff wall as high, if not higher, than any in the world, and I tell you it is a backbreaking business for those of us who are farmers."

"I don't hold with Governments," said the other. "You aren't going to drive me into a corner where I'm sticking up for Governments. They take away the rights of the working-men. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred the Government is wrong."

"You were pretty nearly right that time," agreed the old gentleman. "Nearly every bit of legislation passed by the Government these days means taking away someone's property and handing it over to someone else. But I can't see that you have much cause to complain. If it weren't for the Government, you'd be working from morning till night on a farm."

"Not me! Not by a damn sight! I know too much about farming. It's all work and no play. Eight hours work, eight hours play, and eight hours sleep: that's my rule—and I live up to it. Of course, that's counting eating as play, which it ain't if you live in a boarding-house," he added with a broad grin.

"If everyone ran his day on that schedule, this country wouldn't last long," said the old man.

"I should worry," replied the other, dexterously puffing rings of smoke into the room.

"That's what all townsmen say, and some day they will say it seriously, for they will worry. This country is solvent only to the extent that its farms can meet the competition of the world. The high wages and short hours of the city are maintained by order of the Government; and the Government shouldn't order for one what it can't order for all. It shouldn't fatten your pay envelope out of my pocket. And that's the effect of protection."

"There are more than farmers who are looking for relief," interjected the salesman. "I always think the people who aren't farmers, and aren't capitalists, and aren't unionists, get the worst squeezed. I should like to live in the country. I would almost sell my soul to get my missus and kids out into the fields. City pavements aren't any place for children. Kids need air," and the little man coughed in the smoke-laden room.

"Living has been made dear in country and town alike by Government mismanagement," said the old gentleman. "My taxes have doubled in four years; and yet some people think farmers don't pay taxes."

"Can one make a living on a farm?" asked the salesman —"a man like me, for instance?" and he almost shrank in the asking.

"I wouldn't advise it for you," said the other sympathetically. "I don't take much stock in the 'back-to-the-land' movement. It's the 'stay-on-the-land' movements that count, or would if the Governments gave the farmers a show."

"I believe we're coming to my getting-off place for to-night," said the salesman, peering through the glass at the electric lights of a saw-milling town, as the train began to slacken its speed.

He arose and put on an overcoat, shiny with years of wear. It had been pressed and pressed, and may have been mended, but it was clean. Grasping a small sample-case which rested in the corner, he started for the door. The train gave a jerk and the salesman was thrown heavily against the side of the car.

"Take your time; don't hurry,' said the old man kindly. "This is a divisional point. They change engines here. There is plenty of time."

"I know that," replied the other. "Life is just one jerk-water town after another for me, and the crowded city all the time for the missus and the kids. A divisional point; I ought to know that; I know each crooked telegraph pole and each chipped rail on the line—and that's

about all I do know," he added wearily, "except what's in here," tapping his sample-case, "and that's not worth knowing. Good-night, gentlemen."

"Good-night."

"Good-luck to you," called Larned.

"Thank you, sir."

As the salesman left the car, a gust of fresh air blew into the room and chased its foulness through the sky-lights."

"Going to be a change in weather," observed the old gentleman.

"Talking about changes," said a man who had come in during the conversation and, failing to find a vacant seat, had sat upon the wash-bench, and now took the seat made vacant; "I hear we are going to have a change in Government. They say that Bateman's going out and Larned's coming in."

"So I've heard," corroborated the old gentleman.

"Strong man, Larned."

"They seem to be all alike," grumbled the old man. "Mr. Larned's private car is attached to the train."

"Then we'll not get into Port Arthur on time."

At the mention of his name, Larned thought of retiring, and then, remembering that the object of his visit to the West was information, hesitatingly he decided to remain and take a part in the conversation.

"Aren't private cars a necessity—at least for Ministers?" he asked. "They must travel; and travelling, they must work. They have to carry their correspondence with them, your correspondence—and mine," he added with a smile.

"I don't hold with private cars," said the cigar-smoker judicially.

"The car becomes the Minister's office for the time being, the country's office," urged Larned. "I cannot see how private cars are to be dispensed with if efficiency

is to be preserved. The Ministers usually take their secretaries with them."

"Male or female?" asked the cigar-smoker.

"Male, I believe," replied Larned good-naturedly. He was accustomed to heckling and did not allow himself to be disturbed even by vulgarity. "But my point," he continued, "is that Government work has to go on whether the Minister is in his office or travelling throughout the country."

"Private cars hold the trains back," observed the newcomer.

"I am afraid they do at times," admitted Larned.

"Weren't you going pretty far in your remarks about the tariff?" asked the newcomer, turning to the old gentleman. "You were getting dangerously near to a free-trade argument."

"Then I haven't gone far enough," was the pleasant reply; "for I intended to argue for free trade."

"That would ruin the country," protested the other.

"May I ask what business you are in?"

"Oh, I am a manufacturer all right," laughed the other, "and a protected one, too. I have got a self-interest," he admitted genially. "But leave me out of the question. Ruining me is neither here nor there from the public standpoint. It's the country that's going to be ruined."

"We are trying to save it."

"I cannot see how you will do it by free-trade."

"Why does an industry need protection?"

"Roughly speaking, because it cannot compete with industries working elsewhere under greater advantages."

"Exactly."

"And it pays to protect the manufacturers because of the enormous number of their employees and the huge sums of money they distribute in wages."

"Huge," agreed the farmer pleasantly. "And the burden rests on the farmers' backs none the more easily because it is huge."

"I don't see that. We are all contributing alike."

"Now, wait a moment," cried the old man, leaning forward and raising his hand. "Let us suppose that A makes boots, B makes hats, and C is a farmer. Naturally, all three trade together. A and B are each permitted by legislation to charge a third more for their goods than they can be bought for elsewhere. A raises his price and easily pays for B's hats, while B raises his price and easily pays for A's boots; but C—and, remember, C is the farmer—is obliged by the State to pay A's price and B s price, and is given nothing under legislation with which to pay them. The long and short of it is that A and B are free to buy C's products at the world's lowest price, while C is compelled to buy theirs at the world's highest price."

"It is not quite that," said the manufacturer.

"What is it, then?"

"It's a big question," he said. "You wouldn't have us all hewers of wood and drawers of water?" he asked, after a pause.

"I shan't draw more water and hew more than my share of the wood pile to relieve you, not if my vote will prevent it," said the old gentleman firmly.

"A country needs diversified industries," asserted the manufacturer. "It makes for national character."

"We have to take, not what we want, but what we can afford. Our country's debts are too great; we must confine ourselves to doing those things we can do better than others.

"Where is the country's revenue to come from if the tariff is abolished?"

"Are you in favour of a tariff for revenue?" asked the old gentleman quickly.

"For both revenue and protection."

"The two objects are contradictory. To the extent we protect, to that extent we prevent imports and—eliminate revenue."

"It is not from the tariff alone that the Government derives revenue under protection, but from the incomes of the manufacturers and their employees as well. Did you ever estimate what portion of the country's revenue comes from them?"

"The subject doesn't interest me."

"Oh, no," laughed the other. "That's the way with you free-traders. You are not interested when the argument is against you."

"It doesn't interest me because it is not applicable," said the old man quietly. "Only a few moments ago you told me that the manufacturer could not make both ends meet without assistance. And, therefore, what he contributes by way of taxes to the Government can obviously be nothing more than a part of the assistance he has received."

The other interrupted the old gentleman with an impatient gesture.

"Now wait, my friend, just a moment longer," said the old gentleman. "Sometimes we get confused when we talk of governments and their taxes. Let us suppose that I have a number of sons and that we, as a family, have obligations to meet. All my sons are working, some in production which pays and others in production which does not pay. Necessarily, the latter must have assistance. Now, is the family, as a whole, more able or less able to meet its obligations because the unremunerative businesses have many employees and huge wage-bills? I should have thought it clear that the family's net income was reduced rather than increased by the drain of sons who could not pay their way. Nothing could make me believe otherwise. That is why I am not interested in your point."

"You will lose your sons if you do not help them," urged the other.

"Why is it that we are cultivating only a small portion of the arable land of the country, and merely scratching the soil of what we cultivate?"

"I think you had better answer that question yourself," said the other good-naturedly.

"It is because of the high cost of our production. We have to compete with the world. Hundreds of thousands of arable acres in the East have been deserted. That means that somewhere someone else is producing cheaper. You may reply that they have been thrown out of cultivation largely by the competition of our own Western prairies. And you will be partly right. But East and West are competitors only in the sense that they compete for capital and labour. Our Eastern farms are largely given over to dairy-production, and when an acre in Ontario is turned over to weeds, it means that somewhere another acre, suitable for dairying, has taken its place. I assume you will admit that living would be cheaper under tariff reduction?"

"I don't admit that," said the other. "The prices of many of our staples are no higher than in the United States."

"Then why do you need protection?" asked the old gentleman. "Either you can compete or you can't; which is it?" he asked angrily.

For a moment there was silence, as the free trader's antagonist rose to drink a glass of cooling water. When he resumed his seat, there had been time for reflection.

"Pardon me," said the old gentleman. "I shouldn't allow my temper to get the better of me. But I would like to know, if prices in Canada are on a level with those of the United States, why it is we are lifting millions and millions of dollars worth of goods over the tariff-wall that separates us from the United States?"

"It's a complicated question," said the other evasively.

"Assuming that living is made cheaper by free trade," continued the farmer, "then we must conclude that the result will be a change in the direction of the trek. For years our farms have been drained for the city; is it a terrifying thought that our cities should lose some of their over-burden, and the farms regain that which they have lost? We shall simply be taking our sons from work where they cannot live without assistance, to work in which they can."

"And become a nation of farmers."

For a moment the farmer paused; and Larned, who was watching his face, expected a vitriolic explosion. But apparently he had himself under control.

"You almost had me that time," he laughed. "But I suppose since you city people dress better than we do. live in better houses, travel more and spend more, it is natural you should be disdainful of a nation of farmers. However, I assure you we are quite a decent lot, in spite of our disadvantages."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the other. "I shouldn't have made the remark. I wouldn't, for all the world, have hurt your feelings."

"We hear the remark often," was the answer. "It is the usual remark of the city man, and—it comes in bad grace from those who, on their own confession, cannot make both ends meet without taking money from our pockets to fill their own. But don't worry about 'a nation of farmers'. We shall still need lawyers and publishers and teachers and doctors and merchants, and need more of them, for we shall have a larger population because of the greater effectiveness of our production. And, for the same reason, we shall need manufacturers. That is going to be the big surprise of the New Régime, the increased prosperity of those manufacturers whose industries are really suited to the country."

"There would be an awful disaster in this country if you were to get into Parliament," laughed the other.

"I am not likely to get into Parliament," said the old man. "I don't want to get into Parliament. But if those in Parliament were to adopt my principles, the disaster that is inevitable under the present system would be avoided. Of course, no one would attempt to turn the country upside-down over night. Time would be required in the process of transition from hot-house production to that of the open air."

"The tariff is the most convenient way of raising revenue," asserted the other.

"The merits of a tariff for revenue are, at least, arguable."

Larned had been enjoying the argument. Political arguments were never tiresome to him, no matter how old the story. It is true he generally shared a part in them, but enjoyed this one the more since he had not been asked to interfere. However, he was not to be left alone. The old gentleman turned to him, as the manufacturer showed a disinclination to proceed.

"You know Mr. Larned?" he asked.

"Why—yes—I do," he replied slowly and wonderingly.

"I've heard him on the hustings," said the old gentleman deliberately, "and know him by sight," and I regret to say the old gentleman winked at the Minister of Public Works. But such is Democracy. "Once I heard Mr. Larned discussing the trade question, and then I felt like telling him a story; perhaps you will tell him for me."

"With pleasure," replied Larned laughingly. "I should like to hear the story. It may do me good. I have a keen interest in politics, including the tariff, and enjoy a story, particularly one with a political application."

"Down in the State of Texas," began the old gentleman, "they were engaged in a trade revival, and in a certain town a Fifty Thousand Club was organised, which corresponds to one of your Eastern Boards of Trade. We have several clubs like that in Western Canada, in towns of five thousand population, ambitious to multiply

their inhabitants by ten. After this particular club had got under way it was decided to hold an open meeting. The townsmen and farmers from the surrounding country were invited to attend, and in the audience were a number of negroes. They are partial to revival services, and listened with rapt attention. The president made the speech of the evening. He opened by stating the need of Texas for industries, and painted all the benefits to be derived from smoking chimneys. After carrying his argument on for a while, he came to the conclusion that the crying need of the State was immigration. 'Italy is overflowing with a population of industrious men who are workless,' he declared, 'while in Texas we have innumerable opportunities for industry and workmen are few. We need, above all, a campaign for Italian immigration to the great Lone-star State.' The meeting over, an old negro ventured to speak to the president, who was a leading merchant of the town. 'That was a pow'rful speech you done delivered,' he said; 'but tell me, sah, ignorant to their wiseness,' and the old negro pointed to the departing crowd, 'are those Italyuns you done told us about white man?' 'Certainly,' said the president of the club. The old man scratched his head. 'Tell me,' he enquired, 'don't you think that we done got now 'bout all the white men we can support in Texas?' "

Larned laughed heartily with the old man on the completion of the story.

"I can't see the point," protested the bullet-headed man.

"Maybe Mr. Larned won't see it," said the old gentleman.

"I think he will," laughed Larned. "But I must be leaving now. It is my bed-time. Good-night, gentlemen. I am indebted to you for an interesting discussion." And upon leaving, Larned shook hands with the old gentleman and by the pressure of the hand, in the giving of which politicians are versed, he conveyed the information that he knew that the old gentleman knew who he was.

CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH

THE MAN WITH THE SPONGE

LARNED lessened his pace and shortened his step as he caught up with the old gentleman who, on the previous night, had been arguing for free-trade. Both men were walking the platform of a wayside station; and as it was just before noon, were presumably taking the exercise that is necessary for gastronomic enjoyment.

"Good-day, Mr. Larned."

"I hope you rested well."

"Not as well as I might," said the old gentleman; "certainly not as well as I used to. I am getting too old to sleep soundly on the train. But, fortunately, I am not required to do much travelling."

"You are fortunate, Mr.——"

"Purvis is my name. I beg your pardon, Mr. Larned. I should have mentioned it before. But I thought you weren't looking for introductions last night.

"I am afraid I was on an eavesdropping excursion," laughed Larned; "but it is almost permissible on a train. Isn't it?"

"I think so," agreed Purvis.

Larned took the old man's arm, and together they paced the platform from length to length, Larned measuring his step by that of his companion. Reaching the end of the platform, Purvis stopped and, taking a sharp stick, uprooted the soil. He took a handful of the

earth, squeezed it in his hand, and then spreading the lump, looked carefully at its contents.

"It's good soil for roots," he said.

The two men then recommenced their walk.

"I didn't recognise you when you came into the room last night," said Purvis, "and I have been wracking my brains all morning trying to remember what I said when your name was first mentioned. I hope it wasn't anything unpleasant. Sometimes my tongue gets the better of me. I sincerely hope it wasn't too disagreeable."

"Not at all," said Larned. "You know, Mr. Purvis, we politicians resemble the rhinoceros in the matter of hide. Our feelings are not easily hurt. But then, you didn't say anything that could have hurt the feelings of the most sensitive woman."

"I wonder if women will stand the criticism of politics."

"I wonder," said Larned. "But our time is up. The conductor is signalling us to board the train. Won't you come and have lunch with me?"

The old man hesitated. "I am not on your side of politics," he began.

"What difference does that make," remonstrated Larned, helping the old gentleman on to the platform of *The Thelma*. "We shall sit on opposite sides of the table and you may hammer me as hard as you like. Or, if you prefer, we'll search for points of agreement, and never fear we shall find them."

"I am not so sure of that," replied Purvis. "I am a political Ishmael," he added, sinking into one of the *Thelma's* easy chairs. "No one seems to agree with me."

"It may be you are wrong."

"Numbers never establish right," asserted Purvis quickly.

"I take it you are an agrarian in politics."

"Not exactly. I wouldn't approve of the farmers scribbling laws upon the legislative slate for their benefit, any

more than I approve of the manufacturers and artisans doing it, as they are.

"What do you name yourself in politics?"

"I call myself a Liberal, but I am afraid there are many so-called Liberals who would disown me. Around home they call me 'The Man with the Sponge'."

"That's rather a suggestive name," Larned said laughingly. "I presume you believe in wiping out legislation rather than in making it."

"Exactly. Whatever else fails, there is always a full crop of laws whenever the politicians get together; and as was said by someone last night, nine out of ten of them are injurious. The State is sick; made sick by legislation, and we are seeking to make it well by legislation."

"Like cures like," suggested Larned.

"Our prime legislative need is repeal and more repeal; keep on repealing until the restrictive measures of the past are wiped out. And then let us close the mill for a while; or at least work on short time. The trouble lies in failure to understand the first principles of man's relation to man; and the function of the State. Seemingly, we have assumed that it is quite right for the *ins* to rob the *outs;* and when *ins* become *outs,* and *outs* become *ins,* the only change is that the robbed turn robbers."

"That's pretty strong," the Minister protested.

"Not too strong. There is no other name for it. Lawyers may find a difference between a man taking from another by statute and taking without statute, but I can't. Trotsky and Lenine took, by course of law, but there was no morality in their taking. Surely the statute affects merely the legality, and not the morality or the common sense of the transaction."

"The rich man no longer controls the legislature," argued Larned.

"I didn't say anything about the rich man," replied Purvis somewhat impatiently. "A poor man may commit

robbery as well as a rich man. As a matter of fact, I suppose most of the hold-ups on our streets are committed by men who are exceedingly poor."

"I gathered last night that you were opposed to people becoming rich."

"Anyone may be as rich as he pleases, and not disturb my peace of mind. I am disturbed because the State has made me hand over my hard-made earnings to others. It is the act of forcible contribution for the benefit of others that is wrong; and not the particular pockets into which it is directed. I am just as disturbed over being forced to pay for the shortened day's work of the artisans, as having to pay for the luxuries of the rich."

"Are you not confusing the issues? Surely there is a sharp difference in principle between subsidising the rich man and helping the labouring man!"

"The difference doesn't get home to the man who has to do the giving with the same force as it does to the man who directs it," said Purvis.

Larned was unconvinced, and the old gentleman apparently reading his thoughts, continued: "Remember, Mr. Larned, you can't make something out of nothing. Someone always pays the bill. You think it is the State that confers privilege, but in reality it is the privilege-less ones within the State."

Larned shook his head. "We cannot neglect our social problems," he said.

"The daily papers of your city are preaching a lot of rot about social problems. They would have us believe that poverty is a virtue and thrift a crime. It is more than the thin edge of the Bolshevist wedge. Men are being told that the State owes them a living. It's perfect rot, I say!"

"I must confess I do not go the full distance with the so-called social reformers, but surely the State has responsibility in connection with poverty."

"There is no excuse for poverty in North America. Only the cripples, physical and mental, the widows and the orphans, are deserving of aid, and they are properly the wards of the State. We could keep them in comfort and not feel the burden if we were not taxed for the support of others who, able-bodied and minded, reap where they have not sown. We are encouraging and coddling the unemployables—those who can work and won't work. Your so-called social reforms are only adding to their numbers. There is work for all and a living for all—so long as land is available for all."

"But there are honest workers who do not care for country life."

"No?" enquired Purvis. "They prefer to live in the city. They have laid down a certain standard of comfort and, finding they cannot have it out of their own industry, they ask that it shall be maintained by the State, which in reality means by those of us who are living without State assistance. They expect us who are competing with the ryots of India to shudder at the thought of their being forced to compete with the artisans of Old England. They don't care to live in the country," he concluded in a tone of withering sarcasm.

"I suppose you are opposed to those who would have houses provided for the urban poor by State credit?"

"Robin Hood robbed the rich and gave to the poor, and there are many who would be modern-day Robin Hoods. They are willing to give all that others own, to the poor. It is an heroic rôle; it brings down the house. All the 'ne'er-do-wells' in the gallery thunder their applause; but it only serves to fill the gallery."

"Surely it is the duty of the State to legislate for the happiness and welfare of the community," insisted Larned. "And if, in so doing, it is necessary to take from one and give to another, the transaction is not immoral."

"The State can do no more than put a man on the highway to happiness and well-being. Man must do the actual finding for himself."

"There are grave inequalities of fortune which the State must rectify," insisted Larned.

"The good Lord didn't give us all the same capacity for making fortunes, Mr. Larned, nor for keeping them; and the State cannot change His handiwork. There are inequalities that have been created by the State, and they are to be rectified, not by the creation of more privilege, but by the abolition of privilege. I do not ask the State to help the farmer, for that help cannot be created out of nothing; it must come from someone, and that someone onght not to be despoiled. For the same reason, you ought not to help the manufacturer or the artisan, because you can't do it without despoiling the farmer. That's the issue, and you can't get away from it. You politicians, like the magicians in the show, have confused the public with a passing of hands, and a flow of words; but you haven't created something out of nothing, Mr. Larned. You haven't given to one without taking from another. And what's more, it can't be done, by gad! it can't be done, sir!" and the old man, raising his voice, fairly shouted his words at the Minister.

"But your policy would lead to large aggregations of wealth, which would eventually destroy society," Larned had said.

"Now hold on, Mr. Larned, wait a moment. That's where your school goes wrong. Point me a rich man and I'll show you one who has enjoyed privilege from the State. Abolish privilege, that's my principle, and abolish it with the sponge, I say. Don't try to balance privilege; you can't do it. The machinery of the world is too complicated. Once you give privilege, you've got to keep on giving privilege; once you go wrong, you've got to keep on going wrong; and two or more wrongs never made a right."

"You are an individualist," said Larned.

The old man sank back into his chair, and for a few minutes nothing was heard but the clickety-click of wheels upon rails.

"That's the charge," replied Purvis slowly. "I am an individualist. How often it has been thrown at those who think as I do. As if that settled anything! Once the individual was supposed to be the noblest work of God. It is true he needed a little scrubbing, but the Church was supposed to do that. It was supposed to clean man—the individual—and make him ready for the mansions of Heaven. Then men trusted that the Lord was going to look after providing the mansions. That used to be theology when I was a boy. But, seemingly, the Church —at least the Methodist Church, with its policy of Social Democracy, has grown tired of its part, and is now trying to do that which God promised to do. It is trying to scrub and polish this old earth into a shining imitation of Heaven. But it can't be done, Mr. Larned. Man is still unscrubbed, and there can be no Heaven until man is ready for it. Man has to have the disposition. The clergymen used to call it 'being born again', and I suppose some of them do to this day."

The Minister was anxious to draw from the old gentleman his views and nodded his encouragement.

"Do you know, Mr. Larned," Purvis continued, "whatever man may be, I think a Jersey bull the noblest-looking and wisest-looking animal in all the world. There is a dignity in his countenance, a poise to his head, and sometimes a kindliness in his eyes, that almost breathes of benevolence. But don't trust him out of his stall, and then keep both eyes wide open; don't expect him to behave like anything but a bull if you put him into a china-shop. Both bull and man look all right, but they haven't the disposition—for the china-shop and Heaven. It's slow work changing man's disposition; I'm willing to admit that. It's a discouraging job; but it's got to be done before there can be Heaven."

The car-door having become self-locked, Larned arose to open it and admit a brakeman who was passing through the train. On returning, he said:

"Our labour problems present grave difficulties."

"Indeed they do. And you have your system to blame. Give privilege to one and all clamour for privilege. History is but repeating itself. Remember the days of old Rome. Remember the crowds that were attracted by its games, its triumphs and above all the distribution of its *largesse*. Someone paid for them—and it wasn't the citizens, for they shortened the hours of their working-day, and finally becoming sturdy, slothful paupers, lived entirely upon *largesse*. It was the countryman that paid the bill; first the farmers of Italy, and then the farmers of other countries as well. The farmers of Italy were at last reduced to slavery as the demands grew more exacting. Rome grew out of its proportions, and our cities have grown out of their proportions. Necessarily so. Men always seek the living that is gained with least effort."

"I fear you are sadly out of touch with the times. You are apparently oblivious of the fact that we are living in an era when those who work with their hands must receive recognition. In England, it is pretty generally agreed that the work-day of those who toil at manual labour must be shortened, some advocating even the six-hour day. Humanitarianism demands it."

"Someone must pay for it, Mr. Larned."

"True," said the Minister. "We must pay for it."

"And who are we, Mr. Larned?" Instead of giving the Minister an opportunity to reply, Purvis continued: "The difficulty is this: Well meaning, but unthinking, men have apparently accepted the argument advanced for the shorter labouring day in England, and sought to apply it to this country without stopping to consider the difference in conditions. The English factory is self-supporting; the Canadian factory is not. Remember that. It is all important; it is vital. The wages of the man who works with his hands in the English city, are not supplemented by the man who works with hands and legs on English fields. You say that the shorter day's work for the toiler is urged on humanitarian grounds, but is there no throb of humanity in the country? Have you ever

considered that until the Canadian factory becomes self-supporting, its earnings and its wages must be supplemented by the men who bear the toil and heat of Canadian fields? In England the struggle is largely over a shifting of burden from workers to idlers, but here it is a shifting of burden from one set of manual labourers to another."

"Can you not shorten the day's work on the farm?"

"We cannot and maintain our position in the world's agriculture. And if we lose that—we are lost—and the country is lost."

"Luncheon is served," announced Hawkins.

After luncheon, the train stopped at a station where Larned by appointment was to meet a lieutenant, who, it had been arranged, should travel with him as far as the next stop. "You will excuse me, I know," Larned said, upon explaining the appointment to his guest. Purvis was anxious to retire to his own car; but Larned insisted that he should remain, and finally persuaded him to rest upon the couch. When the discussion with the lieutenant—a matter of organisation proceedings—had been finished, Larned, returning to the observation room, found the old gentleman covered with a rug provided by the thoughtful Hawkins, and sleeping soundly. He retired to his own lounge-room, and also sought a mid-day rest. Before falling asleep, Larned for some time lay wondering if, after all, there was not an element of truth in his guest's contention. "You can't balance privilege," rang in his ears. "We haven't succeeded, at any rate," he said to himself, "and it may be that we are wrong in trying."

Larned was awakened from the sleep into which he had fallen by a rapping on the door.

"Yes," he called.

"Your guest has awakened, sir," announced Hawkins.

Larned bathed the sleep from his eyes, and hurried to the old gentleman. Purvis was installed in an easy chair and evidently had been well-cared for by Hawkins. He

looked refreshed; a cooling drink, half-consumed, was on the table by his side.

"You have been asleep," he charged, shaking his head reproachfully at Larned.

"I have," admitted the Minister. "And you?"

"I have had the first good snooze since I left home. I am almost persuaded to give up the sponge, turn legislator, and have a private-car," he laughed. "Self-interest is strong, you know. It is the guiding principle of unregenerated man."

"It is bad."

"Of course, it is—and good. Like most other things. When fire cooks a meal for man, he calls it good, and when it burns down his house he calls it bad. And, like self-interest, it is both."

"We are trying to render the self-interest of man subservient to his fellow-men."

"That can be done, as I pointed out before luncheon, only by regenerating the individual. It can't be done by the State. It must be voluntary; it cannot be com-compulsory. The group has not unlimited rights. It may not use its authority to deprive one of a natural endowment that another, or the group, may benefit by the deprivation."

"May not?" asked Larned.

"Should not and cannot—permanently," insisted Purvis. "There is a limit even to the powers of the State, as applied to the individual. If the individual is to be pulled down every time he climbs up, after a while he will stop trying to climb up."

"How does that affect the principle of taxation?"

"A man should pay for the service he receives from the State, as he pays for any other service. If the State is protecting five hundred dollars for A and five hundred thousand for B, then A and B should pay proportionately. I am speaking now only of service rendered to property.

There is a payment due for services rendered to person, and that should be paid for by A and B alike, since they receive the same service.

"I am afraid that the incidence of taxation is not as simple as you would have me believe."

"It would be if you were to abolish privilege."

"May we return to the subject of self-interest?" asked Larned. "What you said a few minutes ago interested me. Do you consider self-interest irradicable?"

"The Church hasn't been able to eliminate it from religion. Men are still asked to remember that there is reward and punishment, although the parsons differ as to their natures. Religion is always confusing to me, but this I know, that there is many a man who thinks he is loving God when he is really loving what he thinks God is going to do for him. I know, Mr. Larned, that many of the modern parsons are disposed to take the sulphur out of religion—but they can't and keep the churches filled. And you can't take the threat of poverty and the hope of obtaining affluence out of industrialism and maintain civilization. Kipling's prediction of the time when

'No one shall work for money, and no one shall
work for fame,
But each for the joy of working',

is far from at hand. The seed of what we call progress is the spirit of emulation. When we cease to sow it—yes, and cultivate it—we shall have left only the weeds of amiable inefficiency. If I may be pardoned for changing my comparison, the foundations of civilisation have been laid upon the self-interest of the individual. And it is not necessarily a bad foundation. We have built Civilisation upon the self-interest of the individual, and we should destroy Civilisation were we to eliminate self-interest. It may be that it ought to be destroyed, but that is another matter. In the meantime, we ought to realise that the house will fall when the foundation is gone. It is toppling now."

"You are very pessimistic," said Larned, and he did not smile. Purvis was serious, and his voice did not invite a smile.

"You are not in favour of an extension of group activities," he said.

The old man sat back in his chair, and clasping his hands, spoke as one seeking to thread his way through a maze with the fewest possible steps. "Democracy has a limited capacity," he said. Primarily the State, under it, is responsible for maintaining law and order and maybe a few other things as well. But very few. A jug can hold so much water and not a drop more. Everything human is so constituted. And States are human. At the head of the State there must be a man; call him Premier, President, Comrade A.: call him what you like, he is just a man; not necessarily a clever man, and sometimes a stupid one. He and the organization under him can do just so much work and not a whit more. Crowd something on to his primary functions and you crowd some of the primary functions aside. It is the old story of the jug and the water."

"I fear you *are* an Ishmael," said Larned. "Certainly, your thought runs contrary to the current. The demand to-day is for government ownership."

"Neurestheníia," said the old gentleman contemptuously. "The State owns our forests, and has not protected the common wealth. The State owns our lakes, and has allowed them to be depleted of fish. Not even the poorest farmer has handled his acreage as badly as the United States and Canada have administered the reservoir of food in the Great Lakes. The State has handled, or rather mishandled, our vehicular highways. It has never made a success of its steam railways. The State has charged itself with education—and failed. But why go on? Everywhere the State has bungled, and still the people cry for more bungles. Their demand is explainable only as a species of mania, Mr. Larned."

"There are numerous examples of very efficient industrial group administrations."

"I doubt that. But invariably the examples are drawn from autocracies—better, are to be had under slavery. The farther we proceed towards freedom, the farther we travel from success in group administration.

"There are examples of efficient public operation in this country."

"I doubt it. But this I know, if it exists, it has been purchased by surrender to the spirit of autocracy."

The old gentleman had talked much during the day and was showing signs of fatigue. Larned felt that he had perhaps been selfish in encouraging him to continue.

"Your views are interesting, Mr. Purvis," he said. "I am disposed to agree with much you have said; but you must not forget there is another side to the question. There are two sides to most questions. Have you ever thought of the waste of our present system of competition?"

"Waste," cried Purvis again taking the lead away from Larned. "The meddlers are always talking about 'waste under competition'. It is that very waste that has made us grow. There is a wastage in our bodies and it is but a healthy phase of life. When there ceases to be waste in industrialism, there will be no more progress. May I relate an incident which will illustrate my meaning? It happened when I was in the East on this trip. I was being taken over the buildings of an agricultural implement factory. It was an interesting sight and, of course, I thought of my favourite subject of free trade." And the old gentleman smiled. "I asked my conductor if the industry could not live without protection. It did seem a shame to throw all those men out of work. 'We could live without protection,' he answered, 'but we would require free materials and labour upon a free-trade wage scale.' So you see, Mr. Larned, it is the old story of helping one at the expense of another. But I must not stray from the point in hand. After we had gone through

many rooms, we came to one in which there were no workmen. It was just a vast floor space, filled with old and apparently abandoned tools. 'What is this?' I asked. 'It is the boneyard,' replied my conductor. 'It is where we preserve our machines thrust aside by competition. Over there in that corner,' he said, pointing to a huge pile covered with a canvas, 'is a machine which originally cost us many thousands of dollars. We laid it aside with regret, for it had done good work, but we had to have something better if we were to meet our competition. We installed a new machine, and paid for it out of a three months' production.' That was waste, Mr. Larned, the kind of waste that makes for progress."

"And I suppose the savings went into the pockets of the shareholders," said Mr. Larned.

The old gentleman quietly nodded. "I thought as much at the time," he said, "and suggested it to my conductor. 'Didn't I tell you we were driven into our change of machines through competition?' he asked. And I guess there was something in the answer, Mr. Larned. But what if all the savings went into the pockets of the shareholders! Certain it is they improved their position, and they benefitted the farmers as well. We farmers are not always broad-minded. We sometimes overlook the benefits we have received from improved machinery."

"The benefits of the tariff," laughed Larned.

"Not at all. The tariff limits, rather than encourages, competition, and the self-binder and hay-loader and all the other labour-saving devices were born of competition. Don't think for a moment we should have no machinery if we had no protection."

"I was about to say," said Larned, "that the State, as well as man, has a soul. It, too, has aspirations. It is necessary that provision be made for its continued existence and the realisation of those aspirations, and sometimes that need involves sacrifice on the part of the individual members of the group. Preferably, voluntary sacrifice; if the individual is unwilling, then—compulsory.

I agree with you that one individual should not be sacrificed for the benefit of another. Sacrifice should be made only for all, and is justifiable only when made for all. I cannot agree with you that the individual has inviolable rights."

Larned spoke quietly and mindful of the fact that they were approaching a zone in which his time would be fully employed in fulfillment of his special mission to the West.

Purvis apparently divined Larned's thoughts, for he arose as if to depart.

"I must be packing my things, for I have to change a little farther down the line. I hope you will pardon my plain speaking; but you brought it upon yourself. I warned you. I did not hope to convert you, for you are a practical politician and the world is not ready for my view. It may not be ready—until after the collapse."

"What collapse?" enquired the Minister.

"You have taken from one and given to another, and you have done it in the name of the State. You have first wronged the man from whom you have taken, then you have undermined the independence of the man to whom you have given, and finally—the State! All has been done in the name of, and presumably for, the State! Yet the State is sick. It has become fatally sick under your inoculations of privilege. You are destroying the existence you would preserve. It is incredible folly to think that we can continue travelling the road that leads to Bolshevism without some day arriving at Bolshevism." Then the old man bade the Minister good-bye.

CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH

IN WHICH LARNED TURNS HIS BACK ON SEVERAL THINGS

THE program which had been laid down in Ottawa during the night that followed Larned's conversation with Lady Bateman, was carried out almost to the letter. The Minister met his lieutenants as arranged. There were conferences which lasted into the small hours of the morning, when district leaders told into sympathetic ears their troubles and related their services and sacrifices for the Party. There were conferences in which a score or more discussed the relative merits and prospects of candidates, the strength and the weaknesses and the various details of the organisation, and those of the opposing organisation, and the several things which make up the practical side of politics. There had been no provision made for public meetings in the program, and only in this respect was there change. For, at the insistence of his supporters, Larned found himself addressing two conventions which happened to be in session.

Larned had thought often of his day spent with the old farmer. At the time he had been surprised to find Purvis so well versed in the doctrines of Adam Smith and the men of his school; he was more than surprised to find that the farmers of the West were generally well-read, and especially in economics. In the long, dark hours of the winter, they had read the standard books of the older economists, and many of the new. They had not had city diversions. There had not been for them the

theatres and moving-pictures and the amusements which so largely occupy the minds and form both opinions and character of townspeople. "Is it not possible," thought Larned, "that this difference will eventually have a profound influence upon the country." Wherever he went, he delved into people's opinions; seldom did he express his own. Particularly was he interested in agrarian opinion; constantly he sought the company of farmers.

One of the two addresses given was to a farmers' convention. Then he had sought to feel his way into agrarian thought; he had referred to Empire; he had spoken of Canada as a nation; and in well-rounded periods, had predicted its great future within Greater Britain. He had put his hand upon the relations of the country with the neighbouring Republic, and all the chords he touched had been mildly responsive, but had not disclosed a definite, well-set trend of thought. Like the "star" at the theatre, the politician marks the lines which are applauded. There was no vanity in Larned's interest in applause on this occasion. He cared not for what the audience thought of him; his one thought was directed to its opinion of the subject he presented. He was seeking a key with which to unlock the suffrage of the West. For half an hour he tried in vain. It was when he came to the things that affected the farmers' pockets, that he found unanimity. He had been speaking of the benefits which the Government had bestowed upon Western Canada, and had been surprised that his remarks brought no great evidence of appreciation. And then he had announced that the Government was planning to reduce the costs of transporting grain from the prairies to Europe, and for several minutes had been compelled to stand silently while the hall rang with applause. As the cheers died away, a voice cried out from the audience: "What about more branch-line railways?"

"Never fear, we shall build them in time," was Larned's reply; "but this is a big country. We have much to do

with our money, many spots in which to place it; you cannot expect that we shall spend our all in Western Canada."

"We don't ask for all. We ask only for our share," was the quick retort that had come back from the audience. And as Larned stood on the platform waiting for the cessation of the cheering which had followed, he thought of the words of Purvis: "You can't balance privilege; by gad, it can't be done!" Clearly the farmers of the West were loyal to Great Britain, patriotic to Canada, and well-disposed to their American neighbours; they were not entirely unmindful of economic favours that had been received, but their gratitude (and consequently their votes) was reserved for favours that were to come. They wanted their share of privilege. This conclusion was strengthened by a talk he had had with the president of the farmers' organisation after the meeting. Larned had remarked that the Government was obliged to be guided by the cost of service in fixing its rates, when the chairman had angrily retorted:

"For years the manufacturers have been making millions out of the customs tariff; it is not becoming for the Government to balk now at spending a few millions a year for the good of all the farmers."

"Where are the millions to come from?" thought Larned, and then he remembered the words of the Man with the Sponge; his, "You can't make something out of nothing, Mr. Larned"; and his emphatic: "By gad, it can't be done!" And he smiled as he thought of the hungry boa-constrictor that was supposed to have made an excellent meal by swallowing itself.

It was on the Pacific Coast that Larned had addressed a meeting of city workers. He had not liked the temper of the meeting; he could not but contrast it with meetings which he had addressed a few years before, nay, only a few months before. Then the audience had requested, now they demanded. The Government had failed to pass laws protecting them in *this*; and had passed laws taking

from them *that*; and thus ran their complaints. Labour meetings had once been Larned's delight. His own constituency of East Badmington was largely industrial, and he enjoyed the snap and vim and humour of its political gatherings. But the meeting on the coast was sullen. After all, Purvis might be right. Legislation, restrictive and contributive, might be wrong; for the more that was given at the expense of others, apparently the more was asked for. Men had, by the action of the State, enjoyed the fruits of other men's labour, and angrily insisted upon having more fruit. Where was the end? Never before had Larned clearly seen that, having accepted the integral spirit of Bolshevism, the logical end lay in Bolshevism.

Larned gave few interviews. He avoided reporters, and when unavoidable talked freely, but "not for publication." The files of the newspapers contained only one interview, which I reproduce from the *Bodkin Banner*:

"The Honourable Mr. Larned, Minister of Public Works, was interviewed by the *Banner* reporter last night in the corridors of the *Colonial Hotel*. Asked as to the prospects of a general election, Mr. Larned replied: 'I am not the seventh son of a seventh son, and must respectfully decline to speak of the future. But this I may say, in all confidence, that the election day will come soon enough for our opponents. Their campaign of villification has estranged from them the support of all who have at heart the welfare of the country. It has placed a solid phalanx of men and women behind the Government.' The reporter brought to Mr. Larned's attention the rumour, published in an evening paper of Bodkin, that Sir Henry Bateman was about to retire. 'Tell your readers,' said Mr. Larned, speaking with evident emotion, 'that Sir Henry has the confidence of his colleagues. They are appreciative of his services to the country, admire his ability, and respect his integrity. So long as he is willing to lead, they are willing to follow. I know I speak for my colleagues, and I believe I speak for the mass of the people.' Mr. Larned refused to discuss public affairs at further length. But it was intimated to the *Banner* representative that his visit to the West is purely in connection with the routine matters of his department and is without political significance. The Minister leaves for the North to-night, and will inspect the locks on the Bodkin River, upon the success of which the prosperity of our city is so largely dependent."

The events of the past few weeks had been upsetting ones for Larned. From the work of carrying out policies his mind had bent towards the formation of policies. He continued to ask his lieutenants the old-time question of what would win, but found himself inwardly enquiring as to what was right. He carried on his work of practical partyism, but his heart was no longer in it. He found himself being forced to do that which he had formerly done with enthusiasm. However, the power of discipline was strong and the force of habit still stronger, and within twenty-four hours of the scheduled time Larned had secured the information he had sought, had turned his back upon the prairies, and entered the wilderness which separates East from West and spasmodically elicits the grave concern of Canadian statesmen.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTEENTH

IN WHICH MRS. DIGGS SHOWS HERSELF AS A MIGHTY CLEVER WOMAN

Once the woods of Northern Ontario rang with the gay French songs of the *voyageurs*, and echoed to their calls; once they were the scene of bitter death-gripping struggles in which white man and red man gave their lives, unconsciously for the possession of half a continent. The hinterland is filled with memories of the romance of the past, and the hinterland is not without its beauty. There are lakes, as numerous as daisies in a field, and beautiful like daisies, they are unappreciated because they are common. There are lakes, pond-sized, which may be shouted across, and lakes whose troubled waters, stretching beyond the vision, draw out the imagination. There are streams which, farther down on the Hudson Bay slope, widen into rivers. Here and there are waterfalls, beautiful and fresh—and powerful—inevitably doomed to a humdrum servitude of industrialism. There are scattered bands of slovenly, scratching Indians, sons and daughters of noble red man, degenerated by the guardianship of civilisation. The hinterland will some day be peopled by toiling farmers, for in the valleys are stretches of clay-loam which will be turned by the plow and contribute to man's sustenance. Yet one passes over the railway on which Larned travelled, only to emerge in civilisation with a memory of stunted pines and burnt-over timber. They are monotonous hours and almost unendurable for those who, like Larned, travel them alone. Max Nordau

has said that man is not a gregarious animal, and persuaded us in believing only that he enjoyed keenly his own thoughts. Most men cannot fully enjoy even beauty—alone. Larned sat hour after hour in a huge, leather-covered chair, with legs outstretched, in the observation end of the *Thelma*. He had neither book nor paper; no other diversion than his thoughts—and he frowned.

Out of the wilderness the train ran into North Bay, and Hawkins brought the Badmington paper. Larned almost snatched it from his hand, and immediately turned to the column of steamship arrivals. Hawkins, leaning, peered through the car window.

"They'll have to hurry," he said.

"What's that?" asked Larned, looking impatiently up from his paper, and through the window he saw Diggs, the contractor, and with him a stout, red-faced woman in short skirt running smartly towards the train, and behind them an hotel porter struggling under the load of four enormous travelling-bags.

"They'll have to hurry," repeated Hawkins; and, interested in their race against time, he went to the platform and, leaning out of the vestibule, his eyes followed the movements of the travellers.

The train started.

"They've made it. Just made it," announced Hawkins, returning as the train got under way.

"That's good," said Larned, his face all smiles. He laid the paper on the table and evidently had found that for which he searched.

"It's Diggs and, I suppose, Mrs. Diggs," Larned told Hawkins. "I wish you would go into the train, find them out, present my compliments, and say if they are dining on the train I should be pleased if they would have dinner with me at seven."

"Yes, sir."

The *Thelma* is not a modern steel car. She is of wooden construction (although of steel frame); old-fashioned, but comfortable. Many times during her twenty years of Government service she has been dismantled and made over again. One of Larned's predecessors, evidently a lover of comfort, had had bedroom, bath-room, and lounge-room installed all *en suite*. Larned lay stretched on the lounge, when he heard through the thin wooden partition, a man's voice.

"For once in your life, you're wrong, Maggie," it said.

It was the voice of Diggs. Larned turned and looked at his watch. It was almost seven. He had been sleeping, and had overslept. He must make haste to receive his guests, and yet, sleepily, he tarried.

"I'm *not* wrong, Joel." It was a woman's voice, evidently that of Mrs. Diggs. "Evening dress is always the correct thing after dark. Read any of the society columns you like, and they all say the same thing."

"I never read them," confessed Diggs. "I go a lot on feelings, and I tell you I don't feel right in these togs."

"There is nothing in the way *you* feel, and there's everything in the way *I* feel. You never dined with a Cabinet Minister before; you never dined in a private car before, and especially you never dined with Mr. Larned before. The magazines always refer to him as the best dressed man in public life. Even the English magazines had articles about him and the correctness of his dress, when he was at the Imperial Council. I know he's a 'sticker' on form."

"But, Maggie, who ever heard of anyone putting on full-dress to dine in a train before. All the people looked at us as we passed through the car."

"Let them look. I used to look myself."

"But some of them smiled," he expostulated.

"I used to smile myself."

"Well, you're wrong," he maintained, with the hopeless obstinance of a man arguing with a woman.

"Can't you leave your tie alone. You are getting it all crooked. You'll leave your finger marks on it. Here, let me fix it."

For a moment there was silence, and in the silence the train moved on. If there was any further discussion over the vexed question of dress, it was lost in the rattling and rumbling that followed. Larned, fully awake, jumped from the lounge, hurried through the bath-room into the bed-room and rang for Hawkins.

"Why didn't you call me?" he asked sharply.

"I was just going to call, sir."

"But I am not dressed."

"Are you going to dress, sir?"

"Aren't my guests dressed?"

"Yes, sir," and Hawkins furtively concealed a smile.

"Lay out my dinner clothes."

Larned apologised for his lateness and was formally introduced to Mrs. Diggs. After a few words, they passed into the dining-room and in the narrow aisle that separated dining-room from smoking-room, Larned heard Diggs whispering, "You're a mighty clever woman, Maggie, a mighty clever woman."

"I am under a debt of gratitude to you, Mrs. Diggs," said Larned at dinner, "for the motor car that met me at the dock in New York. If it hadn't been for your kindness, I fear I should have missed my train. Hawkins tells me that he ordered a car, but for some reason or another it failed to arrive."

"There was a chauffeurs' strike," explained Diggs. "That's why your car didn't come, and nobody else's didn't come. I just managed to be lucky enough to get a car, that's all. These strikes are dreadful things. I don't know what's come over labour. It wasn't like that when I was young."

Mrs. Diggs coughed.

"Swallow a bone, Maggie?" enquired her husband kindly. They were then on the fish course.

"No, I'm all right now, Mr. Diggs."

"In them days, we hadn't any strikes," he continued picking up the thread of his subject. "We just worked along and somehow got along. When I handled a pick and sh——"

Again Mrs. Diggs coughed, and this time coughed violently, her red face becoming almost purple.

"Shall I slap you on the back?"

"No—thanks—Mr. Diggs," she replied indignantly, and added: "Mr. Larned is not interested in the story of your early days."

"Beg pardon," said Diggs uncomfortably.

"They were interesting days, Mrs. Diggs," said Larned. "They were great school days in which many of our best men were trained. The school-house is not the only school. Many of the best men of our country left the little red school in their early 'teens and never returned. They were schooled by life, and the hard life of the lumber-woods and the country's public works, was a good school. The school-house is not the only seat of education. One of the most learned men I have met, learned his classics while working on a cobbler's bench in a Scotch village. He once told me that he had made a lot of very good boots, better than we have to-day, while reading the *Iliad*. That man wrote one of the really interesting books on the days of '37."

"Mrs. Diggs thinks my early days are not fit for polite conversation."

"But you do go into such common details," she protested.

"You have built up a substantial organisation," said Mr. Larned to the contractor, seeking to turn the conversation into safer channels. "Wicks, with whom you do not always agree, tells me that you have almost perfected the art of excavation."

"I have a good organisation," admitted Diggs. "You see, Mr. Larned, although I never went to no school of

science, I know my business from the ground up—up and down, so to speak—Mr. Larned, and I've got an eye for a good man, and I'm not stingy with my money to the man who knows his work and looks after my interests. I don't nag my men, I give my foremen their heads, and what's more, I give them bonuses as well. I've got a thousand men on my pay-roll this very minute; I've got work in four provinces and I've got some across the border-line. I'm not afraid to run up against the Yankees. They're no smarter than we are. They just bluff us into believing they are, but they can't bluff old man Diggs in the contracting business." Diggs was absorbed in his subject, and in his absorption, laid his knife upon the table-cloth.

Mrs. Diggs raised her knife and let it fall upon her plate with a perceptible clatter.

Diggs stopped in his recital on his contracting operations and prowess, and looked anxiously across the table.

Mrs. Diggs placed knife and fork upon her plate, in exact parallel, all the while gazing reprovingly at her husband's knife, which sprawled on the linen. Diggs flushed, and shoving his knife across the table-cloth to his plate, stealthily placed it as his wife by example directed.

"Have you a family, Mrs. Diggs?" asked Larned.

"We have no children," she said.

"There are no little Diggses," said her husband.

"Then you are free to travel with your husband."

"Yes, I'm free," she said sadly.

"My wife loves children," volunteered Diggs. "She's just crazy about them. Only to-day she stopped on the main street of North Bay to wipe a stray kid's nose. No, we haven't any children," he added.

"I think I have my hands full with you," Mrs. Diggs said.

"I guess I do need some bringing up," he confessed.

"I am sorry I can't offer you anything stronger than ginger beer or loganberry juice," apologised Larned.

"We understand," said Diggs. "But when you come to our house, and I hope you will some day, I want you to sample some very old rye. It was distilled before they changed the vats from wood to copper, or copper to wood —always forget which. I tell you, Mr. Larned, it's pretty smooth stuff. It cost me thirty dollars a case before the days of prohibition."

"Mr. Diggs!"

"What's the matter now, Maggie?"

"It isn't polite to mention the cost of things."

"It is with liquors, isn't it, Mr. Larned? It improves the taste, doesn't it, Mr. Larned?"

"Our tastes are influenced by the imagination," agreed Larned.

"I know a good story about that," said the loquacious Diggs. "At home we have two kinds of champagne."

"Mr. Diggs!"

"Now, Maggie, don't interrupt me. Please don't try to stop me this time. It won't do no good. I'm going to tell this story or bust, because I know Mr. Larned will like it. It's to the point. One of our champagnes is a cheap one and the other a rare vintage. Some time ago we hired a butler, and he wrapped the bottles around with a cloth. I didn't like it from the start. I like to look at the labels, but Maggie said it had to go, and she always has her way."

"Not always," said Mrs. Diggs, who was obviously trying to conceal just indignation at her husband's recital of their domestic affairs.

"Most always," continued Diggs, without turning to meet his wife's reproving eyes. "But one day the cloth slipped and I saw the edge of a green label, and do you know, Mr. Larned, for two weeks we had been drinking that rare vintage wine without knowing it."

Larned laughed heartily at the incident, and Mrs. Diggs, observing closely, was relieved to find him laughing with, and not at, her husband.

"Will you have a cigarette, Mrs. Diggs?" invited Larned as Hawkins produced cigars and cigarettes.

"Not if I know it," cried Diggs. "I draw the line at a woman smoking cigarettes."

Mrs. Diggs defiantly took a cigarette from the box upon the table, and accepted a light from Hawkins' proffered taper.

"Most women smoke nowadays," remarked Larned.

"It will make you sick, Maggie," admonished her husband.

"I think not," laughed Larned, convinced by her manner of holding a cigarette that Mrs. Diggs was not a novice venturing upon an experiment.

"I suppose, after all, there is no real harm in a woman smoking," said Diggs. "Come to think of it, my grandmother used to smoke a pipe."

"Joel Diggs!"

"So did yours, Maggie."

"She did not," affirmed Mrs. Diggs indignantly.

"Put a spoon in it," advised Diggs, as Mrs. Diggs sat back and in alarm watched her coffee spill with the move ment of the train.

"Yes, it's a good idea," said Larned, following the contractor's advice. "I fear we have a bit of rough track."

Mrs. Diggs put a spoon in her coffee.

"What do you hear of politics?" asked Larned, turning to Diggs.

"Bateman's going out and you're coming in."

"Pshaw! You are not a well-informed politician, Diggs. It is Mrs. Diggs I should have asked. What say you, Mrs. Diggs?"

It was now Mrs. Diggs' turn to look enquiringly across the table.

"Go on, Maggie, tell Mr. Larned all you know. Tell him what you've been telling me. He likes people to speak their minds."

In spite of this encouragement, Mrs. Diggs was apparently diffident about expressing her opinion.

"Please," said Larned.

"You are going to have opposition, Mr. Larned."

"That's interesting."

"Mrs. Rooks is working the women's societies for her husband. She is visiting them all in turn, and——"

"And——" he encouraged.

"You haven't a wife," she said seriously.

"By Jove, that is interesting," said Larned. "You are a politician, Mrs. Diggs. Woman's suffrage has made a wife the valuable asset of the politician, perhaps indispensible. But there's this consolation: a husband will become indispensible to the woman who makes of politics a career."

"You've got to marry," she advised.

"Well, suppose we accept that as inevitable. Now, tell me what kind of a wife I should have. You know, it is said that marriage is a lottery. All men are not as lucky as Mr. Diggs."

"I drew a prize," said Diggs.

"You are both chaffing," said Mrs. Diggs coyly, but not resentfully.

"Now don't forget my wife that is to be."

"She must be a member of all the women's organisations."

"The women have taken kindly to organisation," said Larned.

"They are always swarming," said Diggs.

"They are not going to be political drones," commented Larned.

"She should be a church worker," said Mrs. Diggs, beginning to enjoy her rôle of mentor to a celibate Minister of the Crown.

"Ah, that's important," said Larned. "But what church? That's important also, isn't it?"

"Well, I should advise the biggest for politics," said Mrs. Diggs judicially. "There are some churches for society and some churches for politics."

"And some for religion," suggested the Minister.

"Did you get that one, Maggie?—and some for religion," repeated Diggs. "That *is* a good one. It wasn't like that when I was a boy. Then all were for religion. Now the religion has got crowded out of some of them. When I was a boy, people worked for the churches, and now they are working the churches."

"Precious little you know about it, Joel Diggs," retorted his wife. "I can't drag you to church."

"But you mustn't forget my wife that is to be," expostulated Larned.

"She mustn't be too clever."

"Yes."

"And she mustn't be too well dressed. Women are so jealous."

"But I like women to be well-dressed," protested Larned. "I admire good clothes on a woman."

"If what Maggie says is right, you'll have to content yourself with admiring the good clothes on somebody else's wife," advised Diggs.

"She mustn't be too good-looking," continued Mrs. Diggs.

"Ah, that is fatal," said Larned. "You have completely discouraged me about matrimony. I am sure I should be as well off single, as to have a wife whose good looks or good clothes might send me to political destruction."

Dinner over, the two men talked for some time of work which Diggs had on hand for the Department, and upon exhausting the subject, the contractor and his wife returned to their car, well-pleased with themselves. Larned yawned, stretched his arms, and prepared himself for bed, thinking the while of the problems, political and personal, which demanded solution.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTEENTH

PAGES FROM A MINISTER'S DAY—MR. BUGLE

"Mr. Bugle of Badmington," announced the secretary.

"Are there many in the waiting-room?" enquired a scowling Minister.

"It is full. Mr. Bugle came direct to my room."

"Well, I suppose what cannot be helped must be endured." And with this trite philosophy, Larned turned resolutely from a table covered with the wire-baskets of correspondence which, during his absence, had filled and overflowed. It was the morning of the day in which he had returned from the West, and the Minister was keen for the work that had been neglected. But a Minister has many duties to perform, and, if not the most important, certainly not the least exacting, are the interviews with men who hold the crow-bars of suffrage. "Tell Mr. Bugle to come in," said Larned.

"Glad to see you back, Mr. Larned," said the stout, pompous little man, who held the political fortunes of Badmington and, for that matter, of the Province, in the hollow of his pudgy hand. "Over the seas and back again, across the continent and back again."

"Always coming back again."

"I hope so, Mr. Larned. I hope so," he repeated cheerily.

"That's the aim of politicians."

"How did you find the crops in the West?"

"They are not good, Mr. Bugle."

"Drouths, I hear."

"Only in spots," said Larned, and for some reason or another thought of the incriminating evidence which had been destroyed at the suggestion of Hawkins. "There was frost in the north, and drouth in the south, an unhappy combination and sometimes fatal."

"Don't feel blue, Mr. Larned. It's always like that on election years. The other night we had a lecture from Fyfe; you remember Fyfe. He spoke on 'Probabilities'. and illustrated by a chart of the crop-line of the West. It dips on years of election. Wonderful, isn't it?"

"Providence works in mysterious ways," said the Minister gravely.

"But don't feel blue, Mr. Larned," repeated the visitor assuringly. "We've got along without those Western farmers before, and we'll get along without them again."

"There are more of them now."

"Never you fear. The banner Province will pull the Government through. It's done it before and it will do it again. Ontario is keenly aroused over the demand of the French to have their children educated in their own language. And what's more, they are going to be kept aroused. Whenever they go to sleep, we are there with the pins that prick. That's what we are, Mr. Larned."

"Somebody is keeping the kettle boiling," said the Minister, mixing the metaphors. "But tell me, Mr. Bugle," he continued, more seriously, "what have you against the French-Canadians? You always appear to be bitter against them. Tell me frankly what's in your mind. I have sometimes thought that you must have suffered grievous injuries at their hands. Is it not so?"

"They never did me any harm that I know of."

"Then what's the trouble?"

"Why, Mr. Larned, they are papists, priest-ridden by Rome."

"If that be true, then surely they alone suffer, and they do not complain; at least, not audibly."

"They may be afraid to."

"They are sensitive and quick to resent injustice; I sometimes think them too sensitive. It is inconceivable that they are oppressed by the Church."

Bugle looked at the Minister in astonishment. He had not been accustomed to such remarks from Ministers of the Crown. They had invariably accepted his views on the Catholic question as a matter of course. Ministers had all sorts of visitors in the course of a day's work, and Bugle would not have been astonished to learn that they trimmed, and sometimes re-trimmed, their language to suit their visitors, but he was astounded to find a Minister of the Crown openly rejecting his stock in the political trade.

"It's the country, Mr. Larned, that suffers," he urged.

"And what harm has our country suffered?"

"Why, Mr. Larned," said the astonished Bugle. "A Roman Catholic is—" and he was so full of his subject he ended by repeating, "a Roman Catholic."

The Minister turned his head, but apparently did not smile. Bugle wished he had smiled, and then he would have understood the atmosphere. As it was, he felt it charged with electricity, but could not discover from which direction came the current. He fumbled in his waistcoat pocket and pulled from it a faded clipping.

"Here is something I have kept for a long while," he said. "It is a pronouncement on the subject by one of our representative Protestant Ministers." And Bugle read aloud:

"This is a British country, and will remain such, in spite of the ceaseless machinations of priests who hate liberty, civil and religious, and can never be real friends of Britain. If the French-Canadians will slough the tyranny of priests they may look for an equal share in the life of the country; but if they think that British people are satisfied to have their liberties gradually undermined by Romanism there is an awakening in store for them. We intend to maintain our liberties, at the point of the bayonet."

"What do you think of that, Mr. Larned. "Pretty strong stuff, isn't it?"

"Strong, yes. But hardly Christian. We shall certainly protect our liberty, and, if necessary, by the bayonet. But that is not the issue. Shall we trample out the liberty of those who are not of our religion and our language? That is the issue. Liberty is sweet, as sweet to the minority as to the majority. It is not our liberty or another's which alone should be preserved: it is just—liberty."

"I haven't read you all of the article, Mr. Larned. Perhaps these words will throw light upon the subject. They follow what I have read:

'The Catholic Church is a deadly foe of freedom, because it is in its very structure and spirit a spiritual despotism.'

That's the issue," said Bugle. "No mincing of words; puts it plumb and plain, doesn't he?"

"Poland is Catholic to the core," said Larned contemplatively. "And where has liberty more ardently struggled to live? Generations of Poles (priest-ridden, you say, by Rome) have sacrificed their lives for freedom."

"Let us get away from countries," remonstrated Bugle. "Let us get down to men. I have always maintained that you can't trust a Romanist, Mr. Larned. They can't trust themselves. They are a shifty lot. Why some years ago, just to give you my own personal experience, I lost five hundred dollars by the trickery of a Roman Catholic."

"Have you not lost money by the trickery and fraud of those who pass under the name of Protestant?"

"Course, I have, but that's different."

"I suspect it must be, since there are many who say so."

"You can't trust them. They are bound to do what the priests tell them. If the priests were to tell a Romanist to do away with you and me, he'd do it; he's got to do it, or he goes plumb to hell. That's their religion. That's why we must oppose the spread of their religion."

"Do you know any Roman Catholics really well?"

"Course I do, lots of them."

"Do you think those whom you know would make way with you at the command of a priest?"

"The fellows I was speaking of are my friends. They're good fellows."

"And bad Catholics?"

"Well, to be sure, they go to Church. But that's different, Mr. Larned."

"There are many Catholics who do not obey the priest's injunctions."

"Yes," said Bugle, doubtfully.

"They are enjoined by their priests to be temperate in the use of intoxicating liquors, and so far as I can see, are not better than Protestants when it comes to imbibing too freely."

"That's different."

"It seems to me that it strikes at the very root of the idea that is dropped into credulous ears, that Catholics are obliged to obey injunctions of their clergy, be they good or bad. Are you sure, Mr. Bugle, that we are not casting the failings of those who are Catholic at the door of their Church, and our own upon the back of human nature?"

"Maybe, Mr. Larned. There is always something to be said for a bad cause. You and I know that Roman Catholics pay their bills and behave like the rest of the community; but you couldn't make the man on the street see it, leastwise on the streets of Badmington."

"We are not trying to have the man on the street see it, and sometimes there are those who try to have the man on the street see just the contrary, and too often suceed."

"The situation is pretty bad in Quebec, Mr. Larned. Whatever it is elsewhere, it's bad in Quebec. I've a sister in Westmount. It would do you good to read her letters. They are a treat. They give you a creepy feeling up the back. She's a rare hand with the pen, Mr. Larned."

"Your sister shares you antagonisms?" suggested the Minister.

"I'd hardly call it antagonisms," said Bugle reproachfully. "But I guess it's bred in the bone of both of us. But there's no disguising the fact that the situation is bad in Quebec."

"Does your sister understand French?"

"Course not," said Bugle indignantly. And then, realising that the question might not have been intended as a reflection upon his sister's character, he added: "It's not necessary to understand French to understand French-Canadians. Why, Mr. Larned, a few years ago I saw with my own eyes a house in which the priests keep their—." And Bugle lowered his voice.

"Who told you that?" asked Larned sharply.

"I had it on the word of a cab driver, and cab drivers ought to know the town."

"And their fares."

"Yes."

"He told you a story which has been repeated of Rome and of Madrid, and of every city in which there is a large Catholic population. It has been proved false, time and time again, but there are people who have believed it because they wanted to believe it. Let me tell you of an experience I had in Montreal and, curiously enough, it also began in a cab. I was driving with a friend past a huge stone building, upon which there was mounted a cross, when he made a derogatory reference to the Church and its wealth, attempting to estimate the value of the property we were passing. My curiosity was aroused. I refused to believe that such premises could exist except for some useful and important purpose. Ordering the driver to turn, I went to the door of the building and boldly enquired the nature of its purpose. What do you think it was, Bugle?" and the Minister lowered his voice. "What do you think it was?" he asked again. "It was a home for crippled children. Think of that! Behind

those high walls which had excited my friend's imagination and antagonism there lived little kiddies who had been deprived of the normal activities of child life. That vast building with its broad lawns had been given over to their use. Of course, my friend, who was a very honest fellow, was terribly chagrined; he was profuse in his apologies, and I have no doubt since then has refused to accept, without investigation, the stories and innuendoes about the Church, its morals, and its wealth."

Bugle was worried. "You are not—leaning—to—wards —Rome, are you, Mr. Larned?" he asked.

Larned received the question, much as a man receives an unexpected blow. Over his face there passed a flash of anger, which fading, was followed by doubt. Bugle realised that he should not have asked the question. But why? He could not understand why, and then much to his relief, the Minister spoke.

"I am not conscious of leaning towards Rome," he said, "nor, frankly, am I trying to lean away from Rome. I *am* trying to see things as they are. I wonder if that is possible?"

"Where does it lead to, that's the question?"

"A man need never fear the path into which he is led by an examining, unprejudiced mind."

"A man cannot serve two masters," protested Bugle.

"Aren't Protestant and Catholic both attempting to serve one?" asked Larned quickly. "Surely a man may admire, or love, or serve one Church without despising or harassing the other?"

Bugle shook his head vigorously.

"But we have been led away," said the Minister arising from his chair. "We must not forget that the purpose of our conference is to discuss politics."

"Aren't we?" asked Bugle, remaining in his chair.

"I suppose so—in a way—practical politics.

"You may soon be Prime Minister," said Bugle, and the worried look on his face deepened. "The country

will expect from you a statement of your views on religious and national questions.

"The country may have it any time," replied the Minister shortly.

"An opportunity presents itself at our annual picnic, which will be held in the Badmington Grove two weeks from to-day. Mr. Rooks is on the program."

"What would you suggest as a topic?"

"How would *North America, Rome, and French-Canada* do?" asked Bugle, as if the subject had been running through his mind.

Larned leaned towards his desk, and from the bottom, left-hand drawer, took a box of cigars and shoved them across the table to his visitor.

"A pretty large order," suggested the Minister, seeking to stretch the time for thought he had just purchased at the expense of a cigar.

"Not for a man of your calibre," complimented Bugle, selecting a smoke. "The audience will be largely from your constituency," he pressed.

"If you think the people really interested in my views, consider the engagement made."

"Fine!" exclaimed Bugle. "Your speech will create a tremendous sensation. The bigger, the better. You may speak before or after Mr. Rooks. Which do you prefer?"

"As you please."

"Then you shall speak first."

"Now let us on with our other affairs," said the Minister busily. "What are your estimates for the Province?"

"Here is my report," answered Bugle, rising and handing the Minister a neatly type-written document. His face was once more full of smiles, while his voice had regained its usual cheer. "It is carefully prepared," he said.

"Your reports are always carefully prepared."

"Will you be able to take it up at once?" asked Bugle, resuming his seat.

"Not for some days. I have a report of my own in the course of preparation, and my office is clogged with work."

"Oh, well, I shall wait in Ottawa. I have several Ministers to see, and might as well kill all my birds with one stone. I wish, Mr. Larned, you would pay special attention to my pages on publicity. We propose to have a special campaign against Quebec. The money has been subscribed by the leading men of Badmington. I will give you the names after the election. We have concluded that if attractive advertising pays for pills, it ought to pay for politics. I have seen some of the copy, and I tell you it's sizzling stuff. The people will awaken from their sleep, startled by the thought that the hand of Rome is clutching at their throats. But I must be going," said Bugle, who had for some minutes felt uneasy as from his seat he had raised his eyes at the standing Minister.

"Will the papers publish it?" asked Larned, as Bugle reached the door.

"Certainly. At advertising rates."

CHAPTER THE NINETEENTH

MORE PAGES FROM A MINISTER'S DAY—MR. KEN-LAKE.

After Bugle had departed, the Minister's secretary brought the card of Thomas Geoffrey Ken-Lake, and with it a letter. Larned read the card and turned over the letter. Yes, it had been sealed by a signet ring, a facsimile of which lay in his pocket. Some strange prescience had led him to expect it would be. Larned, looking up, observed a crack in the ceiling. It should be mended. There ought not to be cracks in the private-office of the Minister of Public Works.

"Show Mr. Ken-Lake in," he said.

"I am pleased to meet one of whom Lord Steeleton has spoken so highly," said Ken-Lake in soft English, the beauty of which has seldom been given due appreciation. Men have praised the voices of Italy and of France, and habitually failed to appreciate those of England. There are harsh guttural tones emitted from the mouths of those who live within the British Isles; but there is rare melody in the voices of the cultured Englishman or Englishwoman, and for that matter the cultured Irishman and Irishwoman.

"I have been expecting you," said Larned.

As the two shook hands, Larned noticed that his caller displayed a red rose in the lapel of his coat, and wore a signet ring. For a moment each man looked squarely into the other's eyes.

Larned offered his visitor a chair.

"Am I mistaken in thinking you were looking at my ring?" asked Ken-Lake. "It is of rather curious workmanship. Would you care to examine it closely?"

Larned took the Englishman's hand, glanced at the ring, and asked:

"Do you believe in the language of the hand, Mr. Ken-Lake?"

The Englishman withdrew his hand, with a gesture of irritation.

"*No!*" he replied. "Do you?"

"Indeed, yes. You believe that character and thoughts are to be read in the face. We all believe that. You sometimes attempt to read faces, don't you, Mr. Ken-Lake?"

The Englishman was conscious of having only a few minutes before tried to read Mr. Larned's face. "Yes," he admitted unwillingly.

"Look at the hands," advised Larned. "They tell the story. Men lie with their faces. We all know that. They have trained their brows to conceal the frowns they feel as they have trained their lips to conceal their thoughts. But invariably they leave their hands unguarded. Curious, isn't it?"

"Rather," confessed the other, wondering all the while at what this strange man was driving.

"The shape of the hand tells character," continued Larned; "but for the specific thoughts watch the closing and opening of the hand and particularly the movement of the index finger."

"How curious," said Ken-Lake. "Are you an adept at the language, Mr. Larned?"

"I often amuse myself in a railway-carriage by attempting to read what my neighbours are thinking about."

"And do you succeed?"

"I think so."

And Ken-Lake wondered upon what Larned determined his success. Surely men on this side of the water did not take the liberty of interrogating strangers as to their thoughts! But if they could read them in the hands? What a devilishly awkward business! thought Ken-Lake.

"You have brought me your plans for Imperial Federation," said the Minister.

"By Jove! You *are* a hand reader or a mind reader," said Ken-Lake.

Larned laughed heartily.

"It is in your inside coat-pocket," he said.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" and Lord Steeleton's envoy looked at his coat without discovering a bulge; opened his coat, took from his pocket a packet sealed with a signet ring and handed it to the Minister. "That was a jolly good shot," he said.

"Is Lord Steeleton in good health?" asked Larned, as he placed the package in a drawer of his desk, and locked the drawer.

"Indeed, yes—when I left home."

"He has too much to do."

"Rather. You also have the reputation of being a hard worker."

"We in Canada have little to do compared with the work of the men who in London are struggling with the problems of Empire."

"Our problems *are* rather big."

"And numerous. Let me see. The Islands are filled with domestic problems—education, transportation, and the various forms of social and labour problems. You have problems in India—national, racial, religious, and economic. Frightfully complicated. And you have a problem in Ireland. But you are used to that. It's chronic. And Egypt; there is some kind of a problem over there. I don't know much about it. How many problems you must have," said the Minister, looking at a map which

hung on the wall. "I should think your heads would swim in problems."

"That's one of the reasons for Federation."

"Is the solution centralisation? Is it not rather decentralisation?"

"Did you meet Benjamin Body in London, Mr. Larned?"

"No."

"His favourite comparison is that of Federation with a smoothly-running machine."

"I wonder if he has taken into account the human element of the machine; and fully measured the increased responsibility of the engineer, also human."

Ken-Lake, who was sitting at Larned's side by the desk, thought of Steeleton's parting words: "I don't want to alarm you, Ken-Lake; but I cannot throw off the feeling that our correspondents have failed in attempting to understand, Larned. I hope we are right, and yet I fear all is not as we had hoped with Larned." Had he, Ken-Lake, done the right thing in giving Larned the plan of Federation without having made sure of his sentiment? He had not expected to be asked for it so soon. He had intended to take his own leisurely course in delivering the package; had he been precipitate? Then Ken-Lake did a foolish thing; looking at Larned, he fancied the Minister was studying his hands, and hastily thrust them in his pockets, and as hastily pulled them out again. He was annoyed to find Larned asking with a smile if this was his first visit to Canada.

Ken-Lake admitted that he had never been in Canada before; and Larned confessed that his recent visit to England had been his first.

"How strange!" commented the Englishman.

"We do not call upon each other often enough," said Larned. "We live rather far apart and naturally find it difficult to understand each other's affairs. I found your domestic affairs puzzling to a Canadian. You have a particularly big task on hand in the matter of education."

"The subject is jolly well mixed up," confessed Ken-Lake. "Our educationists are at sixes and sevens as to what ought to be done."

"You are having trouble with labour," suggested the Minister. How many seats do you think the Labour Party will carry in the next House?"

"I can't say."

"Are the Labourists strong for Federation?" asked Larned.

"I suppose they are more interested in their own programme."

"We are all a selfish lot," said Larned. "We see first and sometimes last and always our own wants."

"Quite true," agreed the Englishman.

"Our ideas of right and wrong are largely determined by geography and class-interest."

"We have tried to be unselfish," protested the Englishman.

"And you have been fairly successful, at least so far as Canada is concerned," replied Larned. "I doubt whether Canadians would have as impartially exercised the power which has been in your hands. You are taking a chance in admitting us to a partnership in the administration of the Empire."

"You will learn."

"There were several tragedies while you were learning," said the Minister.

"But I thought Canada and the Colonies generally were demanding a hand," said the puzzled Ken-Lake.

"That's not my opinion."

"You do not favour Imperial Federation?" said Ken-Lake, now thoroughly alarmed.

"I am ardently in favour of many things for which there is no sentiment in the country, and as ardently opposed to many things which are in favour."

"And remain a Minister of the Crown," gasped Ken-Lake. "It is incredible."

"You never can tell—in politics," said Larned, repeating with a smile one of Lady Castleman's favourite phrases.

"You astonish me," declared Ken-Lake. "I thought you were opposed to present conditions."

"We have our freedom. What more do we want? There is nothing more you can give us except responsibility, and that involves surrendering a share of your guardianship. Is that playing fairly with your wards in the non-governing parts of the Empire?"

"I can't say," admitted the Englishman. "I have never looked at the matter in that light. I have thought only that you were dissatisfied with our leadership."

"We express a dissatisfaction at times. We are accustomed to saying that an Englishman blunders; but under our breaths we add that 'an honest blunderer pulls through.' And invariably you pull through. Some of us are beginning to think that it is we who blunder in our opinions of the Englishman's way of doing things. However, that is almost aside from the question; the pertinent point is that, fault-finding and grumbling, we follow, and will continue to follow so long as the integrity of your public men commands our respect.

The secretary interrupted the conversation by bringing a note for the Minister.

"Tell him to come in," said the Minister. "Remain seated, please," he said to Ken-Lake. "I shan't be long. It is a matter which cannot be delayed, and is in no way private."

A middle-aged, blonde-haired and clean-shaven man entered the room.

"Come on, Hansen," called the Minister, rising to meet him. "Give me your figures."

Rapidly the Minister scanned the paper. Take this message to Wicks," he continued, turning to his secretary:

'Hansen's figures satisfactory. Go ahead immediately.'

"And now," he said, turning again to Hansen, "I want you to meet Mr. Ken-Lake, who is here from London, and is interested in Imperial Federation."

The Western Canadian and Englishman were introduced.

"Sit down, gentlemen, please. I should like to know what you think of Imperial Federation, Hansen, and I believe Mr. Ken-Lake will be interested in having a Western point of view."

"Thanks, Mr. Larned. But I really haven't much to say on the subject. There is a little group in our town who now and then discuss it, but we are by no means in agreement. Some hold that the Empire should be divided as a great producing company into departments, each attending, under central administration, to the work for which it is best fitted; and others hold that Canada—which, with us, of course, means Western Canada—should hold aloof until we are in a position to control. The first group maintain that Canada should be the bread-basket of the Empire and the United Kingdom should be the factory from which we draw our stoves and clothes. For myself, I have no sympathy with its contention. Have you ever been West of the Great Lakes, Mr. Ken-Lake?"

"Never," said the Englishman. "But some day I hope to visit your wonderful country."

"You've said it," cried the other. "It is a wonderful country. You could set all the British Isles down in Western Canada and never know they were there. And we have the stuff out of which Empires are made; we have not only the best agricultural land that lies out of doors, but we have inexhaustible supplies of timber and coal, and each year other minerals are being uncovered. We have everything that man requires. We can support many millions of people in Western Canada. I don't want to be offensive, Mr. Ken-Lake, but—the British Isles are cramped. You can't go far without bumping up against

water or rocks or something which limits progress, and in the West you may travel for days and see only that out of which man may make a living. You have had your growth. The future is ours. Some day we are going to supplant the East in the direction of Canada, and afterwards—we may take your place in directing the Empire. But gentlemen, you will excuse me, I know. I must send a telegram to follow up Mr. Larned's, or we shall be losing time."

The Westerner shook hands with Ken-Lake and Larned in a business-like way, and hurried from the office.

"Breezy," commented Ken-Lake when he had gone.

"He is a type of the men who are filling the West," said Larned. "That is why I wanted you to have his opinion—and wanted it myself. He has surprised me in having an opinion. I was in the West recently and found little expression on the subject. Hansen came to Canada by way of the United States. His forefathers were Danes, or at least Scandinavians. He is a good man; but, necessarily, he and his associates are not ingrained with British traditions. They are industrious; they are thoroughly utilitarian. If—in the future—they obtain a controlling hand in the affairs of Greater Britain, I wonder what course they will chart."

"We had hoped the West would be filled with men of Anglo-Saxon blood."

"The Danes have the blood of the Angles, I suppose," said Larned.

"I mean English, Irish, Scotch and Welsh."

"Where are they to come from?" asked Larned quickly. "They are not numerous enough to fill the vacant spots of Empire and then—there is something else. Does the British Islander reproduce his type in the New World? Are Americans and Canadians, whose forefathers were English, not different from the Englishmen of to-day?"

"There *is* a difference," readily admitted Ken-Lake.

"Then if you admire its present course, are you not taking a chance in allowing the direction of Empire to slip from your hands?"

"Are you not in favour of Federation?" asked Ken-Lake for the second time.

"I haven't read the plan you brought."

"I mean the general principle."

"If you don't mind, Mr. Ken-Lake, I shall ask you to allow me to answer that question another day. Have you ever thought that the son usually follows the father's habitation?"

"I can't say that I have."

"You have no countrymen to send us; you have only townsmen. And our crying need is men for the land. Serious, isn't it?"

"Deucedly awkward."

"Men say the breeding-ground of a nation is the land; but if we are to regard British farms as the breeding-ground of the Empire, then—what?"

"It *is* an awkward situation, Mr. Larned."

"More and more the so-called Anglo-Saxon is seeking the city, here, in the Old Country, everywhere. I had my attention focused upon the matter on my way West a few weeks ago. It would seem as if our race had almost deserted the breeding-ground, Mr. Ken-Lake."

"You are not optimistic as to the future?"

"I have always thought the future of any race measurable, not by numbers, nor by wealth, but by the arable acres under its cultivation," said Larned, looking at the crack above and vaguely wondering how long it would be before the ceiling would fall. The crack should be repaired. Upon that the Minister had decided.

CHAPTER THE TWENTIETH

THE BAD MAN'S VIEW OF BADNESS

As Larned left his office on the afternoon of his conversation with Ken-Lake, he met the Honourable Mr. Howell in the corridor. The reader has met him before, and in the first chapter, where he passed in and out of Badmington under the name of the Big Man. It was he who had settled the Dobbins-McMichaelan vendetta; and, settling it as he did, launched Larned's barque on the sea of State. Several years had passed, and he was still the Big Man, for he was still in charge of the party organization. Mr. Howell's iron-grey hair had turned to snowy whiteness, and had been allowed to push its way beneath his hat in a profusion that would have been unpardonable on the head of a younger man. But his face retained the colour of youth; his step was elastic; the cane he carried was a mere nonchalant affectation, not the support of old age. On this particular afternoon, Mr. Howell wore a red rose in his lapel; and as he approached, Larned glanced curiously at his hand, and for some unexplained reason, drew a sigh of relief when he saw there only the turquoise which the Big Man had worn in the memorable days of Larned's first nomination for East Badmington.

"Come for a walk, Billy," invited Howell. "Let's go around the bridges. It will give us an appetite and, besides, an opportunity for a quiet chat about several things."

"All right, Howell. I think the fresh air will do me good."

"You had a busy day," said Howell. "Bugle and Ken-Lake—and both on the same day!"

"They called upon you also?"

"Certainly they did. Ken-Lake has been in and out of my office for the past several days. I am convinced his crowd are going to be of substantial assistance in the coming election."

Howell spoke freely of the intimate things of politics, for the two ministers had reached the broad pavement of Rideau Street; and, as the street was almost deserted, they were beyond the range of eavesdroppers.

"Did you meet Benjamin Body when you were in London?" asked Howell.

"No."

"You should have met him. He swings the group."

"Never heard of him."

"He is a publisher who avoids publicity. He is the mystery behind the movement. I met him, at his request," and Howell straightened his shoulders with an air of satisfaction.

"Did my name happen to come into the discussion?"

"It did."

"That explains several things, and one thing in particular," said Larned.

"You will remember how urgently I insisted upon your attending the conference."

"I am remembering several things, Howell. Truly, you are the man behind."

"But don't overlook Ken-Lake. Although a political dilettante, he has the confidence of the Federationists. They tell me he is immensely rich, and has given thousands of pounds to the cause."

"He is sincere," volunteered Larned.

"We may need some of those thousands," continued the mercenary Howell.

"Can't we get along without his money?" asked Larned, with an irritation he could not have explained.

"That depends upon you. Have you agreed to take the reins from the old man?" asked Howell.

"No."

"Well, you had better make up your mind at once. Like Barkis, Rooks 'is willin' '."

"Why don't you take them yourself?"

The Minister threw back his head and laughed. "That *would* be a violation of the rules. Whoever heard of a Bad Man becoming Prime Minister? No, that is the impossible. A Bad Man is the necessary adjunct of every political party, but—the Bad Man can never be the party figure-head. Think it over, Billy; think of all the Bad Men in politics and think how seldom they reached the top rung. I can remember only one, and he, a provincialist, did not last long enough to pass into history. The political Bad Man may only be a maker of kings. The crown is not for him—for the public never sets a halo around his head. But if he be a clever Bad Man, he can put nearly anyone on the throne except himself. *I* have done a little legerdemain now and then, but miracles are beyond me."

"What about Rooks?"

"He won't do."

"Not frail enough?" asked Larned, smiling.

"Rooks has his frailties," replied the Bad Man easily; "but they are not to my liking. You know, we pick our friends by the colour of their frailties."

"Birds of a feather," laughed Larned.

"Yes," admitted his colleague.

"You and I are good friends," suggested Larned.

"Both human."

"And Rooks?"

"If Rooks is human, he seems to be ashamed of it."

"If you mean to imply that he pretends to be what he is not, I can't agree with you," replied Larned sharply. "I have reason to distrust Rooks, but I refuse to believe he is a hypocrite."

"You misunderstand me," said Howell. "Men will always differ as to what is right and what is wrong. My father used to think driving a horse for pleasure on Sunday afternoon a very great wrong and changed his mind only when, in later years, he learned to play golf. Some men think conformity with certain set practices good, and others see in them only clothes. The motive is the thing, Larned. Is the motive selfish? That's the test by which we may judge between good and evil. Rooks is not a hypocrite. I grant you that. He is sincere. But so is the cat that purrs against the cook's apron."

"Did you ever meet my father?" asked Larned.

"No," said Howell. "Why?"

"You define 'badness' much as he used to."

"He was a sensible man, then," said Howell, complacently. "But, after all, there has been, in all ages, a needless confusion over the difference between good and evil. Evils are simply selfishness done up in different forms and shaded in different colours, according to varying individuality."

"You surprise me; but you generally do," laughed Larned. "I had not thought you interested in such abstract questions."

"Don't pretend to tell *me* anything about Rooks or any of the rest of the crowd, Billy Larned," said Howell, returning to practical politics. "I am old enough to be your father, and I am—in a political sense. It was I who put you on to the first rung of the ladder, and I'm going to boost you to the top."

"You haven't satisfied me yet about Rooks. I am told he is a real possibility."

"Can't see it."

"Confess!" laughed Larned. "You are prejudiced against the man because he's a teetotaler and a prohibitionist. I know his views on the subject are not yours, nor are they mine; but we must admit they are popular."

"Maybe you have tapped one of the nails on the head," confessed Howell. "I simply can't get it out of my head that Rooks is a teetotaler because liquors don't agree with him, and a prohibitionist because he doesn't want others to enjoy what he can't. But—to tell the truth—I have another reason for not liking Rooks. It was only a year ago that Rooks sniffed when my name came up in a party conference. What do you think of that, Larned?" asked Howell. "He actually sniffed."

"I thought you once told me an alliance was possible between yourself and Rooks, although not probable?" laughed Larned.

"Maybe I did, Larned; but, if so, I flattered my generosity, for I can never forgive a sniff. But let us get back to the subject of the day. You didn't like the look of things in the West?"

"They are *not* to my liking," replied Larned, still laughing at his colleague's indignation.

"They are *not* good," agreed Howell, "but it is that which makes me confident of success."

"You talk in riddles."

"Not to a practical politician," said the Bad Man easily. "Things are so bad for us in the farming districts that the townsmen are bound to come unreservedly to our assistance. Have you ever realised that for years past it has taken a full half million dollars to pay the legitimate expenses of a general election campaign in this country? We are sure of our half million, and the other fellows can't get the first hundred thousand of theirs. As a matter of fact, I had a peep at their cupboard the other day, and it is bare, with scant prospect of replenishment. So long as those protected are solely with us, we are safe. A low tariff policy in the hands of the Opposition,

is always dangerous since it tempts the men to hedge their bets."

"Wasn't it Froude who, writing of Rome under the Caesars, said that Capitalists were prone to insure against political contingencies?" asked Larned.

"Perhaps," replied Howell, "but with a strong free-trade wing in the Opposition camp, protected capitalists cannot support our opponents without realising that they are contributing to make a guillotine for their own heads," he added.

"Is there no one sufficiently interested in free trade to pay for a campaign in its support?"

"The movement is practically confined to the farmers and doctrinaires, and it is impossible to raise any substantial sum from them for politics. Each man's interest is small and each man's contribution corresponds to his interest. Like the income tax, the cost of collecting from the little fellows exceeds the amount collected. On the other hand, I can name a dozen men who, under free trade, would lose in one year more money than we shall require to defeat free trade. Men may talk for principle, and even write books for it, but when it comes to digging into their pockets—that's different. The free trade school can raise money to propagate their principles only in proportion to the benefit each individual giver expects to receive. Of course, the same is true of the protectionist, but fortunately for us those upon whom we levy are more get-at-able."

"We are taking advantage of the someone's selfishness," commented Larned.

"I suppose so," answered Howell. "But so long as none of the fund sticks—and I tell you none of it sticks in my hands—we are pure. At least comparatively pure," he added.

"Have you thought of the ethics of campaign contributions?"

"Billy, you positively hurt my feelings when you talk that way. I would have expected it from Rooks, but not

from you. He denounces my end of the business to the public, and encouragingly allows me to finance his district. Now, if I had any idea that campaign contributions were wrong, I would accept neither them nor a benefit from them. The ethics of election funds! Of course, I have considered them. And I only wish all other political things were on so sound an ethical footing. Take your friend, Senator Wickum. Not many years ago, as a newspaper reporter, he offered the Etcetera Trust in the United States and its crowd more money for the exclusive privilege of making their products in Canada than they had been getting from Canada. The offer was accepted. Then Wickum came to Ottawa and had the tariff raised to shut out the competition of the American independents. Wickum is neither a mechanic nor a clever entrepreneur. He designs practically nothing new; he relies almost solely upon the patterns of the American company. And yet, through the natural growth of demand, he is making a cool hundred thousand a year out of the business. Is it anything more than right that once in four or five years he should donate at least the profits from a six months' business towards maintaining the system without which he would be ruined?"

"It would seem almost ungrateful to refuse it," commented Larned. "You reason well, but do you reason aright? Have you justified the system?"

"A country cannot be great without manufacturing, and Canada cannot have manufacturing without protection. The people will not support protection without education, and education costs money. The transaction is as clean as a new willow whistle," replied Mr. Howell confidently.

"I have always believed in protection," said Larned, "because it seemed to me that the State was lacking unless fairly self-supporting. A State, purely agricultural, has seemed to me only half effective. It is like a man with one arm. But I am afraid we have gone too far with the tariff."

"Possibly."

"There are certain duties that must come down. The middle course is usually the safest."

"Don't particularise on the eve of an election; it's bad business."

"A moderate protection is necessary," continued Larned, as if thinking for his own benefit rather than his colleague's; "but, really, down in my heart the campaign fund has appeared indefensible. Perhaps, now that the women are in politics, less money will be required."

"An inane remark, my dear Larned. Doubling the vote, we have doubled the cost of getting it to the polls; the cost of literature, the hiring of halls, the payment for organisers and scrutineers and picnics and bands, and the hundred and one other things that make up election costs: all are doubled."

"Of course, one must explain one's position to the electors, and that means expenditure; but the huge party fund worries me—at times," said Larned.

"The mere fact that the money is usually disbursed from a central fund doesn't affect the situation," said the Bad Man almost angrily. "Why, Billy, I know a member who, supremely prudish, takes nothing from the party fund and wouldn't allow a bottle of ginger ale to be given in his behalf, yet he spends at least five thousand dollars a year in organisation. He has a mammoth card index presided over by an expert, and can tell you to a shade the colour of each elector's hair and politics. He has doubled his organisation since the women received the vote, and now his opponent is beaten before he is nominated. Tell me, is that ethically defensible?"

"I can't say," confessed Larned. "But this I know: so long as that sort of thing is possible, Democracy can be nothing more than a mask for Plutocracy. It is not an outcome of modern times; only the conditions are changed. The principle is as old as representative governments. In the days of Cato Minor, the Romans passed a law against that sort of thing. The candidates were

forbidden to have anyone tell them even the names of the electors."

"Huh!" exclaimed the Honourable Mr. Howell. "I'll bet that law didn't last long."

"Which remark goes to prove your political sagacity," laughed Larned. "Plutarch tells us the law was not well observed. And yet its very existence two thousand years ago ought to be accepted as evidence that the practice of intensively cultivating the electorate is destructive of Democracy."

"But suppose we come down to the year of our Lord which bothers us most," suggested Mr. Howell. "We are immediately interested in the fact that the Opposition, with its limited power of raising campaign funds, is helpless under woman's suffrage."

"Are we not to have a Bad Woman in politics?"

The Honourable Mr. Howell straighted his lavender tie.

"There are no bad women," he said; "but most women have an affection for a Bad Man. However, Larned, don't bother that head of yours about party finance. Keep as far away from it as possible, for whatever its merits, it has a bad name. I held the stirrup for you many years ago, and now want to see you safely in the saddle. The organisation wants you there. You are a safe man. You are not liable to try rowing a boat up the political stream."

As Mr. Larned and Mr. Howell entered the corridors of the hotel, they arranged to continue the discussion, as to change of leadership on the following Sunday. The clerk at the desk handed Larned a telegram with the key of his room.

"We shall have to defer that appointment for a few days, Howell," said Larned, upon reading his message. "I find I have an important engagement for the week end."

"It must be important," drily remarked the man who had held the stirrup.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIRST

IN WHICH A DETECTIVE ENTERS THE STORY.

"I think you will find them all there, Mr. Larned. I thought it better not to break the seals. Our London office assures me that they have omitted nothing that was sent while you were in London."

It was Watson who was speaking, the manager of the cable office. Watson and Larned were in the latter's library and with them was Empringham, a detective well-known and respected on both sides of the border-line.

"Is there anything further that I can do for you?"

"Nothing more, thank you, Watson, at least not now. I appreciate your kindness. You have always given me good service."

After Watson had retired, Larned broke the seals, and in doing so, remarked: "It's a pretty bulky package. I am sure it must contain more messages than were sent in the legitimate way. I can't remember having dictated more than a dozen. However, we shall see what we shall see." And he handed the messages to the detective.

Larned had explained the situation to Empringham on his arrival that afternoon from Montreal. He had told him of having learned by chance that a man whom he had reason to look upon as unfriendly had had information of his movements while in the Old Country. The information could have come only by cable, since it had reached this country some days, if not fully two weeks, before the current mail. He had been visiting friends in Surrey. The message had been sent about

the visit. His friends could have had no possible motive in reporting the week-end he had spent with them. It was beyond the limits of reason that they should have done so by cable. The matter was purely a personal affair; but apparently an attempt was being made to give it political significance. He was not worried about the result, but was curious to know the author of the cablegram and his motive.

"Your secretary knew your whereabouts," the detective had suggested. "And who else?"

"None that I know of, except my hosts who, as I say, are not in politics and are quite uninterested."

"You suspect your secretary?"

"There is no one else to suspect," said Larned regretfully."

"Do you mind telling me who it is that may have expected to benefit by the information?"

"I would rather not, unless it is necessary."

"We may have to know later on; but for the present we can get along very well without the information."

"I am glad of that."

"You use Slater's code," said Empringham, glancing at the messages.

"We do. I am beginning to believe there is something in this detective business."

"I wouldn't be much of a business man, much less a detective, if I couldn't at least recognise that one of the ordinary code books had been used. And I can tell you more," he added directly. "Two key numbers have been used in coding the messages. What's your regular key?"

"Add 63."

"Thanks." And for some minutes the detective with paper and pencil worked over the message in silence.

"I'll give you half an hour to find the other key."

"Thank you, Mr. Larned, but I'm afraid I must ask for a longer time; and if you don't give it I shall probably have to take it. Sometimes there is a great deal of

trouble in deciphering a message which has been coded in even the ordinary way."

Larned filled his pipe and, failing to find a match, caught a light with a strip of newspaper from the logs that blazed within the grate by his side. That was another of Larned's eccentricities, his unswerving devotion to log-fires. He maintained that a bachelor needed log-fires; they could be talked to, they often carried one back to childhood days; and they did that which few human beings could do: they spun fanciful tales of the future. Log-fires were almost human, and in some ways better than if they were. One could scold them, confide in them, and they neither answered back nor betrayed confidences. It is true they were sometimes obstinate, but then what friend is not obstinate—at times? After a while, the logs that had burned so brightly and cheerily inevitably lost their brightness and cheer, and shrunk, grew cold and died and, as ashes, were returned to the ground. Yes, in some ways, log-fires were almost human.

"Your memory is exceptionally good, Mr. Larned," said the detective after perhaps a quarter of an hour. "In the regular way, there were eleven messages sent; at least, I presume so, since there are eleven coded under key number 'add 63.' There were thirty-three messages in addition. They are all under another key, yet to be determined. You were away thirty-five days, weren't you?"

"I can't remember off-hand. Why do you ask?"

"The dates run consecutively, and it looks like a daily report—with two reports missing."

"What are the missing dates?"

"The fourth and fifth of last month."

"I remember. They were the days I spent at Surrey Court, and of course my movements there could not be reported."

"That's getting near to what we're after, isn't it?" asked Empringham. "Do you mind if I ask Watson who

it was that received the suspicious messages? That may be a short-cut out of what may otherwise be a time-taking job. They were all sent to the same cable address, 'Coddling.' "

"You are in charge of the case. Do as you please."

Empringham came back from the telephone looking soberly.

"Mr. Rook's private secretary," he announced.

Larned arose from his chair, laid down his pipe, and threw a fresh log on the fire.

"We had better work on the message sent on the 3rd.," continued the detective, again taking up his pencil.

Larned smoked on and looking at the clock remarked: "You have only ten minutes left in which to prove your prowess."

"And I'm as far away as ever," replied Empringham. "We haven't caught your man yet."

"I have half a mind to go no further," said Larned. "He is only a twenty-three-year old boy."

"I suppose you don't happen to know the date of his birthday?"

"Indeed I do. He told me he was twenty-three the day we left Ottawa."

"That may be my lucky clue."

Only a few minutes elapsed when Empringham handed the Minister a sheet of paper.

"And six minutes to spare," he said. "Add 23, that's the key number. Would you like to see a sample of the work of the young villain who is acting as your secretary? Here it is."

Larned took the message and read:

Chief left to visit Mowbrays, Surrey Court, craving affection.

"The young scoundrel!" cried Larned indignantly. "What the devil does he mean?"

"That's hardly a question for a detective," said the other laughing. "Do you want any more samples of his handiwork."

"I think we had better have a few more," said the Minister. "Craving affection," he repeated contemptuously. "It's incomprehensible to me, but I suppose you have a theory. All detectives have at least that."

"I have."

"Let's have it."

"Not now," laughed Empringham. "Detectives never explain their theories until the case is concluded."

For a few minutes longer, Empringham continued deciphering messages. The work was now only a matter of turning the leaves of the code book, and sometimes the messages were deciphered without reference to the book.

"I think you'll not want me much longer at this job," he said. "I have enough messages done to prove my theory."

Larned took the messages and read:

Returned yesterday. Love-sick and lonely.

"The impertinent jackass!" he ejaculated.

Then he read another:

Still lonely.

The Minister's rage knew no bounds. He angrily tore the paper to shreds and threw it into the fire. "How dare he cable such rot?" he cried.

Empringham inwardly, appreciating the situation, contented himself with inward appreciation.

The Minister read on:

Writing a sonnet.

"The young liar!" he cried. "I wrote no verse in London. I did take unusual pains in writing a personal note to my hostess, and probably that very day; but it was in solid prose. I have never tried my hand at verse—at least not since——"

"You were twenty-three," suggested Empringham.

The Minister was not in a humour for pleasantries, and read the next message:

Nothing but work.

"That's probably true. I did work hard."

Put their eye out at Fish-Mongers' Banquet.

"The thing is incomprehensible," repeated Larned. "Do you suspect a code within a code?" he asked.

"No," replied the detective. "I think it is all quite plain. Someone apparently made a corking good speech at the Fish-Mongers' Banquet. Was it you?"

"I spoke there," replied Larned.

"And there is a woman in the case," said the detective with a broad smile.

Larned resented the remark. He was not accustomed to having a woman mixed up in his cases. He laid the remaining messages upon the table and remarked to Empringham, "You may have a theory that explains these fool messages, but I'll be hanged if I have."

"You'd better send for the boy at once. I'll assume all responsibility. I suppose you won't mind my remaining while you talk to him."

Returning from the telephone, Larned asked the detective if he had any suggestions as to the line of examination that should be followed.

"Don't be too hard on him. Just ask him for an explanation. By the way, how long has he been with you?

"He came into my office only a few months before we sailed, and took the place of a man I had had for years. My former secretary, poor devil, is in a sanitarium, and may never return."

"Where did he come from?"

"He came to me out of one of the Departments, and was well recommended. He has the two languages. It never struck me that he was a particularly clever boy,

but he takes dictation like a dictaphone, and if there is a mistake in the product that comes from his machine, invariably it's mine. He's the last one that I should have suspected of selling me out."

"That's yet to be determined."

"Do you think there's a chance that he did it unwittingly?"

"An excellent chance."

"Why?"

"Evidently the boy is your admirer. And, besides, you must remember I have been in and out of your office a good many times recently over that unfortunate dredging affair. I know the boy."

"Humph!"

"Do you happen to know if he comes from Eastern Ontario—Mississquoi, for instance?"

"No."

In the course of half an hour the secretary arrived. He was quite accustomed to being asked to go to Larned's room. It was there Larned worked over his speeches for the House. Empringham was pleased to notice the secretary was not at all disconcerted at finding him closeted with Larned. In quite an usual manner he put away his hat, pulled out his note-book and sat at the table.

"No dictating to-night," said Larned. "Tell me, what does this cablegram mean, Stevens, and all the thirty-odd cablegrams which you sent in your own code?"

Steven's face lost its colour, as he stared at the cablegram, which happened to be the one reading: *"Returned yesterday; love-sick and lonely,"* and for a moment he gaped at Larned.

"I hope I haven't done wrong in charging those messages to the Government," he said.

"I am afraid it is a very serious offence, punishable by dismissal from the service."

"I don't mind that, Mr. Larned, so long as I don't get you into trouble. I wouldn't have that happen for all the

world. It never occurred to me that our expenses would be questioned, and that the Auditor-General would review our cablegrams. I hope it isn't coming up in Parliament, Mr. Larned. I realise it is that sort of thing which often causes a Minister more trouble than the big issues."

"It's not the expense," said Larned impatiently. "Why did you send messages informing others of my movements? That's what I want to know."

"I can't think of anything that I cabled that could get you into trouble, sir."

"You have at least succeeded in getting me into a passion," said the Minister, whose rage in the meantime had lessened.

"Tell us the object of the cables sent under the key of 'Add 23'," said Empringham.

"I am engaged to be married," said Stevens quite candidly. "As a matter of fact, I became engaged just before I went overseas and the girl insisted that I should promise to send daily messages. Foolish, wasn't it? But then, you know, people are always foolish when they are first engaged. I beg your pardon, sir, I didn't think how that would sound. Perhaps you don't know. B-b-but I did-d-didn't mean that either," he stammered. "It's none of my business whether you know or not."

"I know, at any rate, Stevens," laughed Empringham, putting the boy at his ease again. "Your young lady comes from Eastern Ontario; from near Mississquoi, doesn't she?" he suggested.

"Yes, Mr. Empringham. You know her?" asked Stevens.

"No," said Empringham. "I don't know her. I am just seeking an explanation for your having mentioned the Mowbrays, whom I happen to know live near there."

"Her people live in the village beside their place. She is very fond of them."

"And, naturally, you thought she would be interested in knowing of Mr. Larned's visit."

"It never occurred to me that it might be an indiscretion to tell her that Mr. Larned was visiting them," he replied.

"How did you come to send the messages to Mr. Rooks' secretary?"

"We had become good friends, and I asked him if it was usual to charge personal messages in the expense account. It was he who suggested my sending them to him. But I take all the blame," he added. "He simply passed the messages on. He didn't even know what was in them."

"Are you sure?"

"I didn't tell him the key of the code."

"Did the nameless young lady give him the key to the code?"

"I think it very unlikely, Mr. Empringham, but I'll find out, sir."

While Stevens was at the telephone, Larned asked Empringham how he had associated the boy's age with the number used in the code.

"That was my lucky clue," he answered. "Most detectives are superstitious; at least I am. I always believe that something is going to come my way when needed. The mention of the birthday was unadulterated luck; the use of it was a simple deduction. I proceeded upon the idea that the number which is uppermost in a man's mind is the number most likely to be used."

"I find that he did know the key, sir," said Stevens, returning. "The young lady had difficulty in deciphering the first message and asked him for assistance. Although I can't understand how there could have been any difficulty. I'm sure we practised often enough the night before I left. I'm sorry about this business, sir, but I can't see how it could have caused any trouble, except in charging the accounts. Of course, I'll pay for them. It's been a lesson for me. And, of course, you have my resignation, sir."

"That's not necessary, at least not now. But why did you work me into your messages?" asked Larned.

"There wasn't much of anything else to cable about after the first week. I stuck to the office pretty closely, Mr. Larned, indeed I did."

"I give you unstinted credit for that, Stevens; you were always on hand when needed."

"You took a holiday while the Minister was in Surrey?" suggested Empringham.

"Yes, sir. I went to Dover to try to look across the channel—you see, my mother's people came from France—but it was foggy and I couldn't see the end of the pier. I left word at the office to have me advised of the arrival of any communications. That could not have caused trouble; for none came while I was away. It was all of Sunday and Monday forenoon."

"You sent two cables from Dover then?"

"Yes, sir, and paid for them."

"You and Mr. Larned returned on the same day, and the message which you have just read refers to your return from Dover?"

"Certainly, sir," said Stevens wonderingly.

"That will do for to-night, Stevens, said the Minister.

"Good-night, Mr. Larned," said Stevens sorrowfully. "Good-night, Mr. Empringham."

"Good-night," said Larned abruptly, but not unkindly.

"Why was Rooks interested in having his secretary uncode Stevens' messages? Is that what you want to know?" asked Empringham, when they were alone.

"Not exactly," said Larned.

"Which proves that detectives may make wrong deductions," laughed Empringham. "What more can I do, or are you going to take the case in your own hands from now on?"

"That deduction is right, anyway," replied the Minister. "There isn't much more to be done, and it isn't really necessary to do more, but I'm afraid I simply can't resist the temptation to try."

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SECOND

LADY CASTLEMAN'S TEA

LADY CASTLEMAN was disappointed at finding Mr. Larned out of town on the day of her tea, and the more disappointed upon learning that he had left town on the day following his promise to be present—*if he were in town.* "He must have known all the while," she said, and consoled herself with the thought that politicians were proverbially unreliable. "They are not a bit like ordinary creatures," she told her niece. "You can believe half of what most people say, but the politicians—believe what they say only when it happens. But, mind you, he's a dear, just the same, Alice, and, with care, may become First Minister." Lady Castleman was not discouraged. She had attempted to learn from Larned's office when he would return and, failing, wired Larned and received a reply naming the probable date. Lady Castleman immediately arranged for another tea, wisely allowing a forty-eight hours' grace for the uncertainties that may befall the course of even a well-intending politician.

After the enquiry into the cablegram dispatched by the unfortunate, love-stricken Stevens, the Minister was anxious to meet Lady Castleman. Her assistance was indispensable in pursuing the enquiry into the part Mr. Rooks had played in connection with the repetition of the story of his week-end spent at Surrey Court. Walking along Elgin Street, he saw the Castleman landaulette approaching, and immediately thought he was about to share in Empringham's lucky clue. When the motor-car

stopped at the curb, Larned found that Sir Herbert Castleman's widow was not alone.

"My niece, Miss Castleman, Mr. Larned. Shall we give you a lift?"

"We're going in opposite directions," he weakly protested.

"Not at all, for we are going to turn around and take you wherever you want to go," she insisted.

Larned, entering the landaulette, was surprised to find that Lady Castleman had not over-praised her niece's beauty. Miss Castleman was a pronounced blonde; and Larned, thinking of Polly Masson, found himself deciding, for the first time, that of the two types, both pleasing, he preferred the brunette.

"It was simply horrible of you not to tell me that you were going to be away for my tea," began Lady Castleman; "and would be unforgivable in anyone but a politician. But, you know, I am giving a tea to-morrow afternoon, and you will come, won't you? It's just a small affair. Only those who couldn't come to the last one. There are those who, strange to say, can't enjoy being crushed at a big affair, and, of course, there are always 'the left-overs'. Mr. and Mrs. Rooks will be there, and Mr. Howell, and, let me see—oh, quite a few others. I really can't be bothered remembering now. You will come, won't you?"

"I'll be there, Lady Castleman."

"If you're in town," she suggested.

"If I'm in town or out of town," he announced emphatically, and joined the others in laughing at the absurdity of his answer.

"Just like a politician, ever ready to make promises," commented the old lady. "Although, to be sure, most politicians leave themselves a loop-hole; but here we are at the jeweller's. Alice, the dear girl, has some shopping to do, and I'll run you up to your office while she's making

her purchases. I have my instructions to stay outside, anyway."

"I hope I shall see you at the tea, Miss Castleman."

"From what my aunt has said, Mr. Larned, it is extremely doubtful," she laughed as she left the car.

On the way to the Department Buildings, Larned rapidly ran over the situation in regard to the cablegrams and explained what he hoped to establish at the tea.

"Will you help me?" he concluded.

"Will I help you, Mr. Larned? Do you need to ask? Indeed, I will. Isn't it splendid? While you were talking, I decided upon the details of carrying it out. I owe both of them a grudge, and to think of Mrs. Rooks trying to use me to injure you. The spiteful cat! We'll work together, Mr. Larned. And you'll see that I can do things. And now that's over. What do you think of my niece?"

"I thought her good-looking."

"Isn't she? She has the complexion of a pink rosebud. And she's such a perfect dear. I know she's buying something for me at the jeweller's, something awfully nice and probably expensive. She has been calling at the jeweller's every day for a week, and has been making me wait outside. It looks promising, doesn't it?"

"Indeed, yes," agreed Larned pleasantly.

"I hope it's a necklace. I suppose you heard that I lost my pearl-necklace last winter?"

"The papers were full of the robbery. I should have written you at the time."

"I sent the papers to Alice."

"That was thoughtful."

"Alice has good taste in clothes," suggested Lady Castleman.

"I should think that likely; but, of course, I caught only a vision of her during the few minutes we were together."

"She has beautiful hair," suggested Lady Castleman.

Larned wondered if Miss Castleman had a clever maid, but refrained from expressing his wonder. They were then at the Buildings, and leaving the landaulette, he contented himself with thanking Lady Castleman and remarking that he would see both her and her niece on the following day.

In spite of a contrary determination, Larned was a late-comer at the tea. A deputation pressing for expenditure in connection with harbour improvements had proved unexpectedly obdurate. Larned had pleaded the Government's poverty, and had been reminded of the amounts expended in connection with a near-by port. Larned had protested that the other port had for years maintained an established trade, and produced statistics to support his contention. The deputation, admitting the figures, had replied that the business of a port depended largely upon its facilities. Larned had urged the natural advantages of the other port, and the deputation had almost scornfully asked what Governments were for if not to overcome the difficulties imposed by Nature. And thus the conference had run its stormy course, and might have continued interminably if the Minister, rising, had not declared it concluded on the ground that he must have an opportunity to consult his officials before announcing a decision.

When Larned entered the drawing-room of the Castleman house it was empty, save for a little group of women who sat in the corner. His hostess at once came forward to meet him.

"All is forgiven," she said with a smile. "But for a full hour I have been wondering where you could be, if you were neither in town nor out of town."

"I was almost somewhere else," he replied gaily, "for I was nearly out of my senses. But let me join this group of charming women."

"Mr. Rooks, Mr. Howell, and a number of men are in the library," suggested Lady Castleman.

"The names smack too strongly of politics, and at present I am in no mood for politics. Who would be with such pleasant company in sight, and a cup of tea in prospect—with a slice of lemon?" he asked.

Larned knew all the ladies present. There were, besides Lady Castleman and her niece, Mrs. Rooks, Mrs. Hodgetts, Mrs. Banfield, Miss Edythe Banfield, and Miss Cranby; the last for years Lady Castleman's resourceful companion.

"But why this ceasing of conversation?" he asked. "Have I interrupted the flow of good-fellowship?"

"We have been talking about spiritualism," said Mrs. Rooks, "and Miss Castleman has quite sat upon us, by saying that we know nothing about it. She was in the midst of relating some strange tales about India when you entered the room."

"I am sorry if what I said has offended," said Miss Castleman.

"You were brought up in Dublin, weren't you, Miss Castleman?" asked Larned.

"Yes, Mr. Larned. Has my aunt been disclosing my family history?"

"Never a word about Dublin, I assure you, Miss Castleman, but I think I know a Dublin voice—and admire it." Miss Castleman flushed prettily, while Lady Castleman did not attempt to disguise her pleasure.

"Really, Mr. Larned, you are getting to be quite human," she said. "And the transformation is becoming."

"It was probably impertinent of me to have made the comment; but the damage done, what's the use of apology? Pray continue, Miss Castleman with your account of the spiritual mysteries of India."

"Yes, please go on," pleaded Miss Edythe Banfield.

"We had been discussing spiritualism, Mr. Larned, and someone spoke of the wonderful things done by the fakirs

of India. I have been in India and was explaining that there, as here, some of the supposedly wonderful things are impositions. Habitually we laugh at the credulity of the Hindus and allow ourselves to be duped by clumsy artifices that I assure you would not deceive a blind outcaste in India."

"But wonderful things *have* been done in India that can't be explained by human agencies," insisted Miss Edythe Banfield. "Please tell us about them. You have been telling us only about the pretended ones."

"Some other time," answered Miss Castleman, reticently.

"Do you believe in the Ouija board, Mrs. Rooks?" asked Miss Cranby.

"Indeed, yes, I've seen it tell some wonderful things."

"Really, Mrs. Rooks, I am shocked to hear such words out of the mouth of a devout church-woman," chided Larned.

"I can't help it, Mr. Larned, I have to believe the evidence of my eyes, and over and over again I have known the Ouija board to tell such remarkable things."

"I'm afraid I'm frightfully behind the times," said Larned. "I've never even seen a Ouija board."

"Would you like to see one?" asked Miss Cranby, retiring from the room, and returning with the board. Larned examined it carefully.

"May I see it in operation?" he asked.

"It won't perform for scoffers," charged Mrs. Rooks.

"I shan't scoff," promised Larned. "I shall be as sympathetic as you please."

Miss Cranby asked Miss Edythe Banfield to sit opposite her at the board. "You are so gifted in concentration," she said. "We'll do our best, Mr. Larned, but I can't promise you results, for something tells me that there is a spirit of skepticism in the room."

"I'm going into the library to talk with the men," said Miss Castleman, "for, frankly, I am a skeptic."

"We are waiting for your question, Mr. Larned," said Miss Cranby.

"I'm thinking of one," replied the Minister solemnly. "Ah, now I know what I shall ask. It's going to be something awfully hard, too, something about my English trip. Wait a moment. I have it now. Miss Cranby, where was——"

"Oh, but you mustn't ask me. You must ask the Ouija board. You should say 'Ouija, where was——' "

"Ouija, where was I on the fourth day of last month?" asked the Minister gravely.

Miss Cranby and Miss Edythe Banfield sat in silence, their fingers resting on the pointer, the rest of the party staring at the board in silent attention. For almost a minute nothing happened, and then a creaking sound was heard, and the pointer moved slowly up to the letter S, then to U, then to R, again to R, to E, and finally to Y.

"Surrey!" cried Lady Castleman with well-feigned amazement. "You were at Surrey Court; I know that Ouija is right, for Mrs. Rooks told me you were there. Were you there on the fourth?" she asked, with just the proper pitch of eagerness in her voice.

"It's true," admitted Larned solemnly.

The old lady hurried into the library and brought back a calendar. "Look, Mrs. Rooks," she cried, "the 4th. was a Sunday, and it was the following Tuesday that you told me of Mr. Larned's week-end with the Mowbrays at Surrey Court. The thing is simply marvellous! How could you have known? Who told you?" she asked impetuously.

"My husband," answered Mrs. Rooks in bewilderment.

Lady Castleman immediately returned to the library, and this time brought back Mr. Rooks. Miss Castleman, Mr. Howell and Mr. Banfield followed closely behind.

"Rooks, you are charged with having communicated with evil spirits," said Larned pleasantly.

The Honourable Mr. Rooks rubbed his hand across his forehead and stared at his colleague.

"The Ouija board," continued Larned, "has told us that on the fourth of last month I was in Surrey. I have been there only once in my life, and Mrs. Rooks says that you told her of my presence there on the following day. I have never believed in the communication of spirits, Ouija boards, and that sort of thing, but truly there appears to be something in this incident that requires explanation."

"Isn't it simply wonderful?" whispered Miss Edythe Banfield in awed tones.

Miss Cranby gave Miss Edythe a motherly pat on the back.

"What nonsense is this?" asked the Honourable Mr. Rooks with an attempt at laughter, which died away in a sickly smile.

"Shall I repeat what I have just said?" asked Larned.

"It is not necessary," replied Rooks. "We must not forget our appointment, my dear," he said, turning to his wife. "We are going to be late as it is."

"But, Mr. Rooks, you're not going to leave without telling us how you learned of Mr. Larned's visit to Surrey?" asked Miss Edythe Banfield. "Surely not! Did you have a vision, or was it a dream? Please don't go without telling us. It will become the talk of the scientific world."

"I think I should let the matter drop," said Rooks, turning to Larned.

"It has dropped," said the other pleasantly.

Larned, taking the late-comer's privilege of remaining behind, had just received a second cup of tea when the last of the guests departed. Lady Castleman had said her good-byes, and walking up to the Minister, pressed his head between her hands. "You are a

perfect dear," she said. "You have added ten years to my life. My! But wasn't Rooks mad?"

"Poor Mrs. Rooks. I'm afraid we've got her into frightful trouble," said Larned regretfully.

"Get her into trouble?" cried Lady Castleman. "You don't know her, my dear. I know her like a book. She's got the table turned on him already. I can just hear her laying down the law. I warrant you that right now she's accusing him of having ruined her social position. My, but I'd love to be listening to what they're saying to each other. No, I wouldn't. I'd rather be here. Won't you stay for dinner, Mr. Larned; you will, won't you?"

"I fear I can't, Lady Castleman. I have an engagement for dinner."

"You can stay for a while yet, can't you?"

"Yes," he agreed.

"Won't you sing for Mr. Larned, Alice?"

"Please do, Miss Castleman," asked Larned.

"Not this afternoon, Mr. Larned," she replied. "Aunt Castleman, what were you doing with that dreadful board?" she asked indignantly.

"Playing politics, Alice."

"Yes," laughed Larned. "We were playing a little game of politics. It was played on my behalf. Your aunt and Miss Cranby helped me, and most skilfully. Possibly it was a shabby game, but it was almost justified by the circumstances."

"I haven't an apology to offer," said Lady Castleman. "It was perfectly delightful."

"You have relieved my mind," said Miss Castleman. "I was afraid you had believed in its spiritual powers."

"You are interested in spiritualism?" asked Larned.

"Not that which is called spiritualism in this country."

"You have investigated the subject in India, I understand."

"Only in a fragmentary way, but I learned enough to realise that I want to know more."

"Apparently I interrupted your narration this afternoon."

"When you came into the room I was almost desperate. I had been trying to explain, for the benefit of some very silly women, the difference between that which is true and that which is false in spiritualism. I was attempting to explain with illustrations from my study in India. I had related to them some of the marvellous things that are done in India, and which at first appearing inexplicable on any but supernatural grounds, upon investigation have been shown to be merely the work of clever human hands."

"You refused to speak of the real spiritualism."

"I couldn't, Mr. Larned. I saw that my audience didn't understand."

"Do you think me clever enough to understand?" he asked with a smile.

"It isn't a matter of being clever. It is a matter of disposition," she answered, and Larned thought of the Man with the Sponge.

"Try me with the truth," he pleaded. "I am looking for truth these days."

Miss Castleman searched Larned's face, fearing that he spoke in jest, but found nothing to justify her suspicion.

"There is a school in India," she said slowly, "that believes in God and seeks in His love their existence."

"And haven't we that school here?" he asked, as Miss Castleman paused, evidently in a search for words.

"They scorn to beseech God for favours," she continued, perhaps unmindful of his question. "The beggar may not love; he merely fawns. The men and women of that school do not care if God be all-powerful—they know Him only as their Beloved. Their devotion is self-less.

They give their lives and find their lives along the path of devotion. It is they who have arrived at Truth in spiritdom."

"Have we none of that school in Christendom?" asked Larned thoughtfully.

"Many of the old saints, by sacrificing one world, gained an insight into another, but this afternoon, I felt that I was talking to those who were immersed in this world—and it seemed—almost—sacrilegious to talk about the other," she said slowly.

Larned realised that Miss Castleman did not wish to continue the subject; and shortly afterwards left on the plea that he must dress for dinner, but did not explain that he was dining with the Batemans.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-THIRD

OVER THE BATEMAN DINNER-TABLE

"Any new experiments in dietetics?" Larned asked Lady Bateman as with Sir Henry they sat at the dinner-table.

"I am afraid I do not understand the reference," she replied.

Sir Henry had not seen Larned since his trip. He had been absent from the city when his Minister of Public Works had arrived from the West; and upon returning to the Capital had immediately telephoned, asking Larned to come to the house that evening. Lady Bateman had subsequently made it a dinner invitation. There was no promise of festivity upon the faces of Larned's hosts. A cloud of gloom had settled upon the Batemans and Larned resolved to dispel it.

"I was thinking of the first of the many dinners you have been good enough to give me when you confessed having tried Sir Henry's digestive organs with oleomargarine," he explained.

"I remember now," she said. "And Sir Henry didn't know the difference between it and butter. Indeed, I remember."

"I have implicit confidence in you, Kate, and naturally regard you and the dishes upon our table as above suspicion," said Sir Henry.

"I am rapidly becoming a hypochondriac in the matter of food," confessed Larned.

"There is nothing wrong with the dinner, I hope," said Lady Bateman anxiously.

"No, no! It's Hawkins, the man in charge of *The Thelma*."

"I remember him quite well," said Lady Bateman; "a spare man, bald and clean. We have had him often. He was most attentive; and if I remember sets a good table."

"Did he give you any unusual dishes?"

"Not that I can remember."

"Perhaps it's another case of Sir Henry and the oleomargarine. You didn't know."

"What you don't know can't hurt you," sagely remarked the Prime Minister.

"I'm not so sure," answered Larned. "Take my advice and beware of Hawkins. Or it may be that he reserves his out-of-the-way dishes for me. By the way, have you ever eaten a buffalo steak, Sir Henry? Hawkins served one for me on the last trip."

"I thought the buffalo had disappeared long ago."

"One of the Provincial Governments was shipping several buffalo to another park, when they ran amuck and had to be killed. At least, that is the story told by Hawkins. And, of course, he got a few steaks for me. I had moose—although I am sure it was out of season—prairie chicken and I can't tell how many different kinds of game."

"What was the buffalo-steak like?" asked Sir Henry.

"Good, juicy beef. Mine was just a little tough, but Hawkins explained that away by saying it hadn't been hung long enough."

"I can't see anything to worry about, Mr. Larned. Most of the things you mention are appetising."

"But I haven't told you all. When you hear my story I shall have your compassionate sympathy; of that I am sure. One night I was suspicious of the dish that had

been set before me, and the more suspicious because Hawkins lingered longer than usual at the table.

" 'What is it?' I asked.

" 'Can't you guess, Mr. Larned?' he replied.

" 'It isn't one of the three animals usually sacrificed on the altar of gastrology?' I suggested.

" 'No, sir,' he answered.

" 'And it isn't a rat,' I said at random.

" 'I don't know,' said Hawkins, rubbing his head.

" 'Great guns, man! Aren't you *sure*?' I asked, almost falling from my chair.

" 'Well, you see, it's like this,' he said. 'It's a beaver and some say the beaver is a third or fourth cousin of the rat family.' "

"I assure you, Lady Bateman, I was quite sick at heart —and somewhere else, as well. I was all uninformed about the beaver's zoology and had never tasted a rat; but if relationship is at all determinable by taste, then I'm convinced there is a most intimate blood-relationship between the two, for the beaver has the taste one would expect of a rat."

"You don't think Hawkins ever served us with— beaver, do you, Mr. Larned?"

"No fear," he replied laughingly. "Oleomargarine may be eaten by unknowing people, but rats? Never!"

"What did you do, Mr. Larned? I hope you read the officious man a sharp lesson."

"Oh, Lady Bateman, you can't know Hawkins. His honest face was simply beaming with pride at the surprise he had prepared for me. I couldn't reprimand him, and I couldn't think what else was to be done. I struggled on, but it was no use. My arm struck. It was as if paralysed. It refused to raise a fork to my mouth, and then out of sheer desperation I fell upon a happy idea. I considered it really brilliant at the time. I pretended to have noticed a passing mail-train at the last station, and

sent Hawkins into the body of the train to secure copies of the daily papers from the news-agent. When Hawkins was out of sight, I promptly threw the contents of my plate out of the window."

"That was a foolish thing to have done," said Lady Bateman. "It was simply inviting your man to serve beaver for the rest of the trip."

"I thought so immediately afterwards, but at the time I was at my wit's end. However, it turned out all right, for I haven't had beaver since."

"Hadn't you deceived him, after all?" asked Sir Henry. who had closely followed Larned's story.

"No," said Larned mournfully. "I bungled the job. You see, in my haste, I threw away the beaver's bones and, of course, Hawkins was sure to know I couldn't have eaten them. I didn't think what a silly ass I had been until that night when I was lying in bed and feeling rather hungry."

Lady Bateman and Sir Henry were amused at Larned's story, and finding them laughing, he promptly told another, which they thought more amusing. Larned's humour was contagious. Sir Henry related several anecdotes of his early experiences in the political field, and even Lady Bateman narrated a story which added not a little to the gaiety of the occasion.

After an unusually hearty outburst of hilarity, Lady Bateman said: "It is really like old times. I haven't heard Sir Henry laugh for goodness knows how long, and I haven't had a good laugh myself for weeks."

"You are positively renewing your youth," said Sir Henry. "For a while back, I have thought you were beginning to show signs of age."

"The Macleod family Bible says I'm sixty something."

"Oh, Lady Bateman," protested Larned, "you almost make me disbelieve the Good Book! Sir Henry, we shall have to pass an Order-in-Council providing for another revised edition."

"Lady Bateman hasn't been looking as well as usual," commented Larned, "but she is going to renew her youth in Sir Henry's decision to remain in politics," he added.

"I fear that is impossible, Larned," said the Prime Minister gravely, and rising, the little party retired to the library, Lady Bateman accompanying the men. Larned had fully determined to follow up the subject of Sir Henry's tenure of office, but no sooner had they settled in the library than Sir Henry asked:

"What's this I hear about your encounter with Rooks this afternoon?"

"News travels quickly these days," said Larned.

"There is no mystery about my having heard of the incident. Howell was my Ouija board. He said the situation at the tea was tense for a while, but he couldn't fully appreciate it, since he did not understand what it was all about."

Larned told the story as briefly as possible, but gave to Lady Bateman and Sir Henry its salient points.

"It served them right!" pronounced Lady Bateman as he concluded. "There is altogether too much gossipping."

"Be that as it may," said Sir Henry," I fear it was impolitic, Larned; you ought not to deviate from the politic course when you are in politics."

"I think I am losing my disposition for politics," said Larned. "I have been hearing a lot about dispositions lately, and it may be that I am going to be born again into a new one."

Lady Bateman and Sir Henry apparently did not understand Mr. Larned's remark and the latter asked:

"What did you find in the West, Larned?"

"You can carry the country, and no one else can."

"Nonsense!" protested Sir Henry.

Lady Bateman arose as if to leave the room.

"Please don't leave us, Lady Bateman," asked Larned. "All the sordid details of my trip are to be left for another conference."

"Yes, stay if you want to, Kate," said Sir Henry.

"I am very much interested, but thought you would prefer to be alone," replied Lady Bateman as she resumed her seat.

"I assure you there is no nonsense about my statement, Sir Henry. I am not unduly exalting you, nor unduly depreciating myself or others whose names have been mentioned. If Sir Henry Bateman's name is not strong enough in the West, all I can say is—there is none stronger. The West is not disposed to place its votes upon names, if I am not mistaken; it knows what it wants—its share of bounty. Perhaps it wants more than its share, and more than we can give it if we are to hold the East. But the conflict for privilege is largely that between town and country, and you must remember there is a large urban population in the West which is not disposed to stand behind the demands of the farmers with respect to the tariff."

"I understand that the labour situation is bad in the cities."

"As bad for our opponents as it is for us. I rather look for a number of opposing parties at the next election, and am confident that, as leader, you will emerge from the contest with the largest following."

"I am too old, Larned. The party needs a younger man."

"Non—I almost said nonsense," laughed Larned. "All this clatter about young leaders is rot. There is nothing like an experienced hand at the tiller."

"It takes physical strength."

"Let others provide the muscle. You provide the experience. You wouldn't have antagonised Rooks as I did to-day."

"I have resisted greater provocation in my time."

"And I couldn't resist," affirmed Larned pleasantly. "I didn't want to resist, and I fear I shall never want to again. Do you know," said Larned, turning to Lady Bateman, "I am quite worried about my mental condition. I find myself constantly and strangely impelled to tell people the truth."

"Are you giving up politics?" asked Lady Bateman.

"I may be given up by politics," he replied.

"That's a certainty if you succumb to the impulse, but I thought perhaps your temptation to tell the truth was away from politics. Are you thinking of commencing with Polly Masson, or is it to be the rich Miss Castleman?" she enquired with a smile.

Larned started. "Oh, I forgot," he said. "I fear I am becoming quite sensitive about people knowing of my week-end with the Mowbrays. But then I have just told you of it, haven't I?"

"You told me of it on your last visit; but I was too dull to comprehend. I knew that the Mowbrays were in Surrey and when you spoke of that county as if it were all England, I should have surmised the rest. I heard of your visit on the following day, and of course understood the reason for your confused geography. When the real story came to me, I was assured that it was quite old. I am always the last to hear anything these days."

"Do you know Miss Masson, Lady Bateman?"

"I've met her several times, but can't say that I know her. She impressed me as being reserved and haughty. Apparently I didn't win her confidence."

"I know you would like her," assured Larned eagerly.

"Then it is not to be the rich Miss Castleman," laughed Lady Bateman.

"Is she really very rich?" asked Larned.

"Her father had a mania for buying corner properties in the business centres of cities," answered Sir Henry, "and

apparently exercised extraordinary judgment in his selections. I am told that the estate owns very valuable property in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, as well as in cities of the Old Country and the Continent. The principal has been tied up in such a way that only a part of the annual income may be spent. Its value must now be enormous."

"She is beautiful," said Larned, "and has looked below the surface of things."

Lady Bateman looked at him curiously.

"Let us hark back to politics," he said. "I want to anticipate my report to this extent: I have definitely decided not to accept your offer of a few weeks ago. It is not in the party's interest that I should become Prime Minister, and it is not within my own disposition—at least at present."

"Will you stay in the Government with Mr. Rooks as leader?" asked Sir Henry.

"No."

"Not even if I arrange to have him apologise for—his indiscretion?"

"No."

"Then who else is there?" asked the Prime Minister.

"Sir Henry Bateman."

"I'm sure I don't know what to say," said Sir Henry, but there was no despair in his voice.

"If I may say so, Sir Henry, I think you have been led astray by a few loud voices crying in unison."

"But the country may have been led astray," urged Sir Henry.

"I stake my reputation, such as it is, upon the fact that if the party can't win with you, it can't win without you," said Larned earnestly.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FOURTH

MR. KEN-LAKE'S OTHER MISSION

KEN-LAKE was far from pleased with his interview with Larned. It had been his initial experience in political diplomacy, and he had bent his mind upon making it an initial success. In the quiet hours on board ship he had rehearsed what he should say—and the manner of saying it—and had tried to anticipate what Mr. Larned would reply. But nothing had happened as expected. Although Ken-Lake had never had a high opinion of colonial statesmanship, and had been willing to make allowances for difference between leadership at home and leadership in the colonies, he was not prepared for the startling unlikeness which Larned bore to his ideal of statesmanship. Nor did he understand Larned's eccentricities and Larned's attitude toward Federation.

"What did he mean by that piffle about hand language?" Ken-Lake asked himself as he sank into the cushioned seat of the chair-car that was to bear him to the station nearest to Mississquoi House; for, as the reader may have surmised, his political mission discharged, Ken-Lake lost no time in visiting the Mowbrays—and Miss Masson. Fortunately he possessed a wide streak of common sense, and soon banished politics from his mind, and fixed his thoughts upon the second, but dearer, object of his visit to Canada.

Miss Masson met Ken-Lake on the arrival of the train, and the baggage being sent on by carriage, together they proceeded to walk the two miles that lay between

Mississquoi House and the dépôt. They had passed through the little village of steep roofs and narrow streets; they had swung into the side-road that winds up the ridge dividing Lac Mississquoi from the river.

"It was cruel of you to miss the ship," said Ken-Lake. "I had counted the hours of the passage and imagined they would be the pleasantest of my life, and they were just beastly."

"Sea-sick?" suggested Polly kindly.

"I'm never sick at sea," he protested, indignantly. "In fact, I'm rather a good sailor."

"It was the *modiste* that disappointed me at the last hour," she explained. "And, of course, I really couldn't go without my hats. Now, could I, Tommy? Marie and Allan were awfully disappointed. I urged them to leave me behind, for I knew you would be annoyed over our desertion. I offered to cross alone, but they wouldn't listen to me. So we three left together, just four days after you had sailed. It was too bad not to carry out our plans, but all's well that ends well," she added consolingly.

"I'll forgive you," he said magnanimously, "and let my wrath be a warning against future offence! But now that I am here, relieve my suspense, Polly. You know you promised me an answer in Canada."

Ken-Lake stopped on the country roadway and looked appealingly at his companion.

"Please say 'yes', Polly."

"Come along, Tommy," called Polly, who had continued on her course. "We're going to talk this thing out fully and fairly as I promised."

"Just say 'yes'—and then we shall talk," he coaxed.

"That won't do," she protested. "There are several things first to be decided. People should be in love with each other before they talk of marrying, shouldn't they?"

"Yes," he agreed, taking her arm, "and I love you, Polly," he said, bending and looking into her eyes. "And you love me, don't you?" he asked persuasively.

"Tell me, Tommy, what is love?"

"It's what I feel for you."

"But what is love?" she persisted. "Until I know, I can't decide whether I am in love or not."

"That's a stumper," he announced, taking off his hat and looking thoughtfully. "What is love? I'm afraid I can't give you a meaning out of the dictionary. Of course, there are some awfully good descriptions in poetry, but really I can't remember them. I never could remember quotations. It's stupid of me, isn't it, dear? Why didn't you warn a chap that you were going to ask that question, then I should have been prepared? Byron has a number of perfectly ripping things on love. I wish I could remember them," he sighed, "but I can't. How stupid!" and for a moment he thought of his failure that morning, and had a foreboding that he was in for a second failure that day.

"Can't you tell me in your own words?"

For a moment Ken-Lake stood as if in deep and intricate thought, then he said:

"I feel as if I could do anything for you: give my life, my all, for you. I swear I could go to hell for you," he added desperately.

"Then I'm not in love," she replied promptly; "for I don't feel that way at all."

For a few minutes they walked along the country road in silence. Ken-Lake realised that he was facing a situation that would strain the utmost extent of his ability. It was Polly who broke the silence.

"If you do go there, remember I shan't see you in the next world."

"Polly!" he remonstrated.

"Oh! Tommy, here is something I want to show you." And Polly, opening a gate beside the roadway, led

Ken-Lake into a plot of ground commanding a magnificent view of the country-side. Together they gazed over the valley.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" she asked.

"Beautiful," he agreed, looking fondly into her face.

"Look, Tommy, at those neatly tilled farms stretching back from the river front."

"What a sea of wood!" said Ken-Lake, as his eyes followed the scene.

"There *does* seem to be almost more fence than field when you look across the valley sideways," she admitted. "Our fields are narrow. The farms were laid out that way in the early days of the Colony. Then the rivers were the only highways and, of course, everyone wanted a frontage on the highway. There were also fishing rights on the river that went with the land. As the farms were divided by inheritance, they became narrower and narrower; and if the law hadn't stepped in, goodness knows what would have happened: they might have looked like threads instead of ribbons."

"The English also cling to their fathers' customs," he said.

"Yes, and we admire them for it. They are not nearly so obstrusively 'up-to-date' as our English-speaking neighbours who ridicule us for being behind the times. But do you know, Tommy, sometimes we actually find that the old ways are not too bad for modern days? Look at those houses which, like two white bands, line the river-banks. They *hold* a community life. In the summer there are picnics and excursions, and in the winter such jolly times on snow and ice and all the time there is the Church. It is simple, but it is beautiful—to me. We French-Canadians are awfully archaic, aren't we?"

Ken-Lake looked at Miss Masson's modish golfing attire and wondered.

"At its best, farming is hard work," she continued; "and devoid of social life, becomes unendurable. Some of our young people drift to the city, it is true, but they

are held on the land better than the sons of the more progressive farmers of English-Canada."

"At home, there are families which, as tenants and labourers, have clung to the same land and the same cottages for generations."

"Our people are free-holders," she reminded him. "They own and till the land their fathers owned and tilled. When the war came there were thousands of our boys who, for the first time, slept away from the homes in which their grandparents were born. We are home-loving people in French-Canada," she said. "That is our great love—the home."

"In the English-speaking districts around Badmington the fences seemed to be mainly of wire," said Ken-Lake, looking over the brow of the hill at the rows and rows of rail-fences extending back from the river.

"Yes," she said with a sigh. "We are lingering behind progress. I can remember years ago having heard an English-Canadian neighbour reprove my father because he would not throw aside his rails and line the fields with barbed-wire."

"Why barbed?" he asked. "That's what we did to the Huns and they to us."

"I think the idea originated across the border-line. The barbs were supposed to remind the cattle not to wander from their own fields."

"Sounds beastly cruel."

"And so it is, and more—it proved to be unprofitable. That's why they are being abandoned. The man who reprimanded father for not falling in line with progress had some valuable colts actually destroyed by his own barbed fences. Now it is generally recognised that the thousands and thousands of dollars spent for the barbed-wire were wasted. I know the story, for barbed-wire was a pet aversion of my father. He always maintained that our farmers were right in sticking by the rails. I tell you this to indicate that the new way is not always the best

way," she said. "The wire fences are practical; but they don't beautify the landscape, do they? Our English-Canadian neighbours think them necessary. And we are adopting them, the barbless ones—slowly. We never rush at anything in French-Canada. The wire fence is supposed to keep the snow-drifts from the roads. But French-Canadians don't mind the snow-drifts as do their neighbours. In the winter, the English-Canadian drives forth with a two-horse bob-sleigh and a shovel and digs his way *through* the drifts; while the French-Canadian, with a pipe and pouch full of home-grown tobacco and a one-horse sleigh—maybe two—and half a load, climbs *over* the drifts. That's the difference between the two races. We are unprogressive, aren't we? We cling to our rail fences. But they were our fathers' fences, and we love our fathers' ways. I suspect that's the real explanation of the sea of wood in the valley."

"You take the easiest way," he suggested.

"Yes."

"I'll try awfully hard to make your way through life easy—and happy," he told her earnestly.

"It is here I intend to live—if I marry," she continued. "I am going to have a house built upon this very spot, and feast my eyes upon its picture of pastoral contentment. This is on my part of the property, handed down generation after generation, within our family. I shall spend all my days here," she said positively. "But, Tommy, we must be on our way if we are to reach Mississquoi House by dinner time."

They returned to the highway, and for some distance again walked in silence. Then Ken-Lake said:

"We shall live in England a part of the time."

"No," she said definitely. "I shall never live in England. Maybe once in a long while I might pay a short visit to England and the Continent; but when I marry, it shall be upon the definite understanding, reduced to writing, that I am to live here."

"I shouldn't care to live here always," he said guardedly.

"You don't like Canada?"

"I prefer living at home," he said; "that is natural."

"Perfectly," she agreed. "That's why I intend to live here."

"Can't we compromise?"

"No," she said sternly, "for you see I'm not willing to go as far for you, as you are for me. You said you were willing to go to—the most uncomfortable place of all for me, and I'm sure Canada isn't as bad as that. Oh! but maybe you are willing to take only a little trip!" she added pleasantly.

"Polly, please be serious."

"I am awfully serious," she said. "You are going to live in England, and I am going to live in Canada. How can we be married? It seems quite impossible, doesn't it?" she asked.

"We might live here a part of the summer," he suggested slowly, "and spend our winters at home."

"Oh! but, Tommy, that would never do. We should miss the winters, and Canada is at its best in winter. Then the river is ice-bound, and all the valley is covered with snow. And it's cold—oh, so splendidly cold. I have known the thermometer to register thirty below zero and stay under twenty for days and days."

Strangely enough, Ken-Lake refused to share Miss Masson's enthusiasm for the joys of the Canadian temperature.

"It's heavenly at Mississquoi in winter," she urged.

"Are you never frozen?" he asked.

"Sometimes. But not entirely; and then, of course, we thaw out. Frequently, as a child, I have had my ears nipped by the frost, and only last winter, Allan's hand was frozen. It was a ghastly sight. Marie and I were with him and had a frightening hour before we succeeded in bringing it around."

"I couldn't possibly live at Mississquoi in winter," protested Ken-Lake.

"You said you would go to— Oh!" she cried, leaving her sentence uncompleted. "Perhaps you prefer hot weather."

"Temperate weather," he corrected. "It can be beastly cold at home, you know; but when it is, I clear out for the Riviera. You'd like the Italian winters."

"I spent a winter there, as a child, and another upon leaving the Sacred Heart. It's not at all like the Canadian winter," she said positively.

"Nothing like it," he agreed.

"And then there is the Church," she began. "I should expect you to become a Catholic before—we married."

They had been walking at a smart pace under the spurring suggestion of the approaching dinner hour, but now Ken-Lake stopped with a start:

"Oh! Polly," he said, reproachfully. "I didn't think you would ask me to give up the Church of my fathers. I couldn't, Polly. Really, I couldn't."

"But, Tommy, I thought you were willing to go—*au diable*—for me. I'm sure you can't think our Church as bad as all that," she protested. "You are not an Orangeman, are you?" she asked suspiciously.

"What's that?"

"Tommy, it looks hopeless," she said, ignoring his question. "You won't live in Canada, and you won't become a member of my Church. You can plainly see it's all your fault."

"Allan didn't change his religion," he argued.

"No, Marie was not as exacting as I am," replied Miss Masson.

"Your sister is frightfully keen on the Church."

"Yes, but not so practical—as I am," said Miss Masson complacently.

"The Mowbrays get along famously, in spite of being of different churches."

"Allan isn't very particular about Church."

"Nor am I," he replied hopefully. "I swear we shan't disagree over religion."

Polly shook her head resolutely. They left the highway and walked for some minutes along the old Masson road that is lined with maples.

"Then you may find some inconvenience here," admitted Polly after a while. "We have prohibition."

"Never fear, I found that out upon arriving in the bally place," rejoined Ken-Lake.

"You ought not to speak that way of my native province," reproved Polly. "Prohibition is an awfully good thing—and, besides, Allan has a well-stocked cellar. But it can't last long at the present rate of consumption," she continued. "Since prohibition came in, Allan's reputation for wisdom has spread throughout the countryside. We are thinking of calling him Solomon. The villagers and farmers are coming in relays to the house for—advice on every imaginable subject. Of course, he is immensely pleased with himself and the respect they show to—his opinion."

"Prohibition is all bally rot," pronounced Ken-Lake, ignoring the subject of Mr. Mowbray's specious popularity.

"I suppose you would miss your Scotch-and-sodas," said Polly gravely.

"Beastly thought," he suggested.

"Do you think so?" she asked pleasantly.

"Why can't you have soda in this country?" he enquired.

"We have."

"What they call soda-water here isn't at all like ours at home. It's sweetened, or something is done to make it unpalatable."

"Tell me, Tommy, did you really ever drink soda *sans* whiskey in England?" asked Polly curiously.

"I can't remember," replied Mr. Ken-Lake. "The country is impossible," he added, with some heat.

"Oh!" gasped Polly.

"Quite impossible," he insisted firmly.

"Did you meet any of our statesmen at Ottawa?"

"I met several of your politicians."

"Mr. Larned?" she asked.

"The most impossible of all," commented Ken-Lake. "He fairly threw me off my feet by some ghastly rot about hand language."

"Hand language," mused Polly. "Threw you off your feet. I wonder what he meant! But here we are at Mississquoi House," she cried. "There it is, just ahead, in that clump of trees. After dinner you'll tell me about your interview with Mr. Larned."

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIFTH

ON THE PATH OF THE LONGEST ROAD

It seemed as if the little log-house would be torn from its foundations by the storm that swept the valley of the St. Laurent. The woman who sat, beads in hand, before the logs that blazed and crackled in the stone fire-place, turned anxious eyes toward the window and, rising, sought to pierce the frost-covered panes. The heels of her shoes were high and narrow, yet she walked with surprising ease and grace. She wore a neat jacket and a short petticoat, hardly reaching half the leg, and in this particular imitated the Indian women of her day.

"He is strong, my Jean," she said, speaking in French to herself. "He is very strong," she repeated, "and with him is Jacques. Big, strong, faithful Jacques. They will pull through; they will come home."

The wind shook the cabin and rushing down the chimney, scattered embers over the stone floor and blew out the candle that burned beneath a picture on the wall—doubtless a holy picture, probably that of the Sacred Heart or the Virgin Mary, but unrecognisable in the dim light. The woman relit the candle. The shadows thrown from the rafters on the ceiling flickered and trembled, giving an uncanny life to the scene.

"Maman," cried a child, sitting up in a small bed by the corner. "Maman," persisted the little fellow.

"Hush, Jean, don't be frightened, little man," replied the woman with soothing voice that told of Norman origin.

"I'se had a bad dream," whispered the child.

"Never mind, little man, it is only a dream. No harm can come as long as we trust in God. He is taking care of you and daddy and Jacques, and me, and everyone in the valley this stormy night. Don't cry, my little one," said the woman, gently lifting the sobbing child from the bed, and holding him close to her breast.

Again the little house trembled, and the wind sweeping through the valley shrieked in its ferocity.

"Maman," the voice was low. "I'se frightened."

"Why, Jean! It's God's wind. Don't be frightened."

"I don't like God when he's noisy," protested the child.

"Hush, Jean, you shouldn't say that," chided the woman. "He sends his storm to try us. Do we believe in God?" she asked herself. "Do we really believe in God?" she thought. "We do," she answered aloud, as if renewing her vows. "Then all will be well," she added confidently. "Come, little man, back to bed, and we'll just ask the Holy Mother to guard with special care Her little boy this night."

"Is daddy home?" enquired the child.

"Not yet; but he's coming," she said confidently. "He and Jacques are coming, and the dogs are coming. They'll be home soon."

Again the wind shook the cabin, and the boy nestled closer to his mother. "Where are they now?" he whispered.

"Safe in a snug cove by the river-side, sheltered from the storm," she assured the child, and sought to believe her story true.

"I wonder what daddy's bringing me from Montreal?" said the child dreamily.

"Who knows, my little man? Maybe a real, wooden soldier, all painted red and blue."

"Really, maman?" and the child, sitting up in his mother's lap, opened wide his eyes in expectation. "Do you think daddy'll bring me a painted, wooden soldier?"

"He may, my dear. But now, back to bed, and while little Jean sleeps, the blessed Mother is going to look down upon him from Heaven."

And softly and prayerfully the mother sang that prayer in which mariners for centuries have presented their petitions to Heaven:

"Au secours, Vierge Marie! Au secours!
Viens sauver mes jours,
C'est ton enfant qui t'en supplie,
Vierge Marie, Sauve mes jours,
Vierge Marie, Au secours, au secours!

O Mère pleine de tendresse,
Vers toi les pauvres matelots
Lèvent les yeux dans la détresse,
Et soudain tu calmes les flots.

Egaré sur la mer du monde,
Mon esquif vogue loin du port;
En écueils elle est si féconde;
Hélas! quel peut être mon sort!

Tu le vois, ma frêle nacelle
Est le jouet de l'ouragan;
Marie, étends sur moi ton aile;
Sauve-moi, je suis ton enfant!

Parais, étoile tutélaire,
Chasse les ombres de la mort,
Que ta bienfaisante lumière
Me montre le chemin du port."

No more did the cottage shake, no more did the wind shriek, and suddenly through the fantastically frost-covered panes came the soft rays of the moon.

"She heard," said the woman, and kissing the sleeping child, she rose from the bed-side and blithely worked over the steaming pots that hung in the fire-place. "Jean and Jacques are going to bring their appetites with them," she said with a smile.

"I cannot have you work so hard, Marie," Jean had told the woman some years later as together they worked in the fields. "It is not right that one who has known *la belle France* should undergo the fatigue and perils of

this wilderness. We will return. We will go home this autumn."

"Not so," protested the woman. "Look at those blue-capped hills, Jean. Listen! You can almost hear the waters of the St. Laurent. Gaze yonder at the reflection of the trees in Lac Mississquoi. Indeed, Jean, it is a goodly country. Some day, Jean, you and I are going to rest on yonder hill, and these valleys will teem with a race that is of our blood, and of our faith, and of our tongue. Yonder," said she, pointing to the South, "are the English. God never meant this country for just one people. He made it big enough for two. We have driven our stake. You and I have toiled together in the building of our little house, and I remember every log that went into it, Jean—and love them all. Little by little we are clearing our fields. We have our children—four—Jean, Marie, Pauline, and Donat. This winter, if God wills, Jean, a little stranger is coming into our colony. Then we shall be seven, Jean, seven Canadians. Some day we shall be a people," she said.

"As you will, Marie," said the man.

And father and mother bent again to their tasks.

Years had passed, many years. A century had sped itself on the longest road—the one to eternity. As the woman had foretold, Jean Masson and Marie Masson were asleep on the little hill, and beside them lay little Jean, who did not like God when he was noisy. He had become a man and father of another Jean, and grandfather of still another, and in old age had been laid beside his parents.

In the room—and it had grown—sat a man and a woman. The woman sobbed as if her heart were breaking; the man, with drawn face, silently stared into space. His arm was bound in a sling. Against the wall leaned an arquebus.

"It's all over, Marie," said the man despondently; "all over. Montreal has fallen. We shall return to France. The Englishmen have said that we may take

what we will of our belongings. How can we," he asked, with bitterness, "take these valleys and mountains, and the river—the majestic St. Laurent? They were ours and our all," he cried defiantly. "We inherited them from La Salle, from Frontenac, from men of our blood who paid for them with their fortitude and their lives. And the home," he added. No longer was there a ring of defiance in his voice. "*Our* home," he said brokenly, "the home that our fathers and mothers made, and we have—loved and—guarded—until now. We must leave it. All is lost."

"Don't say that, Jean," remonstrated the woman. "God is but trying our faith. There is a God, and there is a Mother in Heaven. Don't give up," said the woman, wiping away her tears. "We *cannot* give up, Jean."

They were women of strong faith, these daughters of New France.

The woman left the house, and, calling to her side little Jean, who played unconscious of danger, she took his hand in hers and together they walked to the banks of the St. Laurent and, upon the spot where in years gone by the children of the family had been christened by voyaging priests, she laid bare her soul in prayer.

The child joined his mother's supplication. He had not realised the extent of the disaster. He did not know that even then strange voices were heard in the market-place of the town beneath Mount Royal. He only knew that father and mother were overcome by a burden of sorrow, and with the implicit faith of childhood he asked and trusted that *le bon Dieu* would remove the burden.

The shadows of night were settling over Lac Mississquoi and through the dusk there came a canoe. With hand-shaded eyes, the bandaged man gazed over the water.

"It is Raymond," he said, when a less-experienced eye would hardly have discerned a figure.

"And he brings news," added the woman, "important news."

In those days the children of the wilderness possessed the secrets of water and wood, which have been lost in the combing of the soil.

The man and woman hastened to the shores of the lake. Raymond jumped to the shore as the canoe grated on the beach.

"Good news!" he shouted. "Great good news! The English Governor has said we are to have our language and our religion. He has asked us to stay. He has said that we are to be French-speaking Britishers, free in the land of our forefathers. There is to be change in sovereignty. In all other things we are to be as we were."

The woman's face brightened, but the man doubted. He refused to be comforted.

"I have it from Rousseau, and he from the *seigneur* down the river. It is true," insisted Raymond.

And still the man could not believe.

"It *is* true," repeated Raymond earnestly. "The British Governor says a man may be British and speak French, and that the disabilities affecting Catholics in England shall not apply to Canada. He says that never has Britain taken from a people their tongue, their religion, or their nationality. 'That's not British,' he says. And the *seigneur* says history proves his statement."

"Jean, God has been trying our faith," said the woman. "I knew he would protect us. For the moment, I must confess, my faith weakened, and I felt with you that we were forsaken, and then," she added reverently, "little Jean and I went to the river and besought the intervention of the Virgin Mary on our behalf. After that, something seemed to tell me all was well. After that, I did not doubt."

There were bon-fires on the shores of Lac Mississquoi that night. From the top of the brulé-covered hill that lies back from the river, there came a glimmer of light. Joseph Marchildon, the hermit trapper, knew the

great good news: that, under Britain, French-Canadian nationality was to be preserved.

Then came the story of revolution in *la belle France*. The sorrow of it; the deadening horror! A revolt not against the King alone — that was bad enough; but against God as well—and that was almost incredible. Streets had run with blood, and statues of Jesus and the Holy Virgin had been broken or thrown into gutters. Jean and the woman and little Jean and all the people in the Valley, thanked God they were British and free to worship after the manner of their forefathers. On the far away banks of the Détroit River and along the shores of Lac Ste. Claire, there were men and women and children, who, kneeling, offered their thanks to God.

Again had years gone by in their interminable course. There had been bickerings between the old inhabitants and the new; there had been dissensions between the men of the land and the men of the town. Even the new inhabitants had not agreed among themselves, and bitter had been their reproaches.

There was to be an Ontario and a Quebec. The news travelled slowly into the countryside. "Let the lawmakers decide what is best," said the people. "There may be differences, but we are British—and Britain is fair."

"My cousin has written me to say that they are separating us from Quebec, and that our rights are not protected," Baptiste Baby had announced from the church-steps to the little group which, mass over, had gathered around the church door.

"Nonsense!" replied a Jean Masson of that day. "That's the way trouble begins. We have been loyal; what have we to fear? We speak French; but are we any the less British? You are a trouble-maker, Baptiste Baby."

"But my cousin says that M. Dorion has protested against our being placed without protection under the control of an English-Canadian majority. My cousin—"

"Your cousin has told only half the story," interrupted Jean Masson impatiently, and mounting the steps of the Church, he turned to the people. "I, too, have a letter, and it is from Quebec," he said. "Let me read it to you:

"'Plans for Confederation are moving very rapidly these days. Of course, there are trouble-makers, those who would turn English against French and French against English; but surely, in spite of our differences, we have learned to trust in each other's sense of fair-play. We have learned that it is a benefit rather than otherwise that we have diversity of races. Cartier has made this fact plain in the conferences. In Upper Canada the Catholics will find themselves in a minority; in Lower Canada the Protestants will be in a minority; while the Lower Provinces will be divided. But that need cause no alarm. Cartier has asked under such circumstances "would anyone pretend that either the local or general governments would sanction any injustice," 'and answered his own question by the statement that' *"it would be censured everywhere."* 'Whether it came from Upper Canada or from Lower Canada, any attempt to deprive the minority of their rights would be at once thwarted.'

"You are a trouble-maker, Baptiste," continued Jean Masson, turning an angry voice upon his opponent as he folded the letter away; "M. Dorion, you Baptiste, and your kind, with unjust suspicions, are trouble-makers. Can any of you think," he appealed to the perplexed people standing in the churchyard, "that in Lower Canada our compatriots would deprive the English Protestants of their religion or their language? That is not possible. Then, why should we attribute to English Protestants less sense of fair-play than we ourselves have? National and religious differences arise out of suspicion. That is the germ of dissension between peoples—suspicion. *We must have confidence* in our English-speaking compatriots, and our confidence will win their confidence and ensure their justice."

And thus did other men, others of the nationality that is French and Catholic, assure the people who are British in Canada, of their nationality and their religion.

The fate of Confederation lay in the hands of the French-Canadians. Had not George Brown said in the conference of the Fathers of Confederation:

"Here sit the representatives of the British population claiming justice—only justice,—and here sit the representatives of the French population discussing in the French tongue whether we shall have it. One hundred years have passed away since the conquest of Quebec, but here sit the children of the victor and the vanquished, all avowing hearty attachment to the British Crown—all earnestly deliberating how we shall best extend the blessings of British institutions—how a great people may be established on this continent in close and hearty connection with Great Britain. Where, sir, in the pages of history, shall we find a parallel to this? Will it not stand as an imperishable monument to the generosity of British rule?"

The fate of Confederation lay in the hands of the French-Canadians. They could have prevented it. There is nothing written more legibly on the pages of history. But they chose rather, through the assurance of Cartier and those of his school, to accept it, to advance it, to look forward with pride to a greater Canada; and all upon the faith that the majority within each of its self-governing parts would preserve, to the minority, the exercise of its religion, its language, and its nationality.

Again had years gone by.

A great steamship silently glides its way down the rushing waters of the mighty St. Laurent. A motor-car stands on the gravelled roadway. It was on this spot that, several centuries ago, Jean Masson had proudly gathered his first—and scanty—yield of corn. The little log-cabin that shook in the gale is gone, and in its place there is a rambling stone house with sharp eaves, and before it runs a broad, red-tiled verandah. Upon the verandah there sits a daintily-attired woman, a child of Norman men and women whose blood for centuries has been running its course in the valley of the St. Laurent.

Three bare-legged boys with fishing-poles in hand walked over the lawn and, upon seeing the woman, touched their caps.

"Thank God they have left them their manners," said the woman, and rising, she called them (in French) to her side.

"Yes, Miss Masson," and the boys dropped their poles and scampered to the steps of the verandah.

"How goes the school?" she asked.

The boys turned in embarrassment to one another—and were silent.

"How goes the school, Paul?" asked the woman directly, of the oldest.

" 'Tis not as it was, Miss Masson."

"No, my child, it is not as it was. Does the teacher tell you the story of La Vérendrye, who first of Canadian-born braved the perils of the Far West?" she asked.

"Yes, Miss Masson."

"In French?"

"No. 'Tis forbidden, Miss Masson."

"Does the teacher tell you of the battles our fathers fought with the savages?"

"Yes, Miss Masson."

"In French?"

" 'Tis also forbidden—in French—Miss Masson."

"And the story of Madeleine de Verchères? In all the world there is no example of youthful endurance and courage like that of the little French girl who, with two soldiers, an old man, and two small boys, as small as you, held a Canadian stockade for ten days against a savage foe. Surely it may be told in the French language to the descendants of the French race in the schools of all their native land!"

The children shook their heads.

"The teacher says it is history, and may not be told in French."

"Yes. 'Tis all history," said Miss Masson sadly; "our history—stories of the exploits of our people. And the world has said it is a good history, replete with tales of courage, fidelity and piety. Yet the lessons of that history may not be given in the schools of our native land—save

through the savourless medium of the conqueror's tongue."

The woman felt a tugging at her heart and a choking at her throat. Through eyes blurred with tears she saw the children standing wonderingly before her. She clutched at the railing of the verandah.

"Run, my children, to the kitchen," she said kindly, "and ask Lizette for some tarts. I saw her preparing a famous batch this morning. Tell her I said you were each to have two."

"Oh, thank you, Miss Masson."

When the children were gone the woman left the verandah, and with a head bent in sorrow, mounted the staircase to her chamber. There she stood before an open window and gazed over at the little hill where lay Jean Masson and Marie, their children and grandchildren. Then she leaned her head upon the sill—and sobbed. "No," said the woman, rising; "it cannot be. God did not bring our people through the savageries of Indian warfare, did not feed them when there was famine and preserve them out of the calamity of invasion, only to desert them now. In all the world, there is no people who have more faithfully sought to serve God. He is trying our faith," she whispered to herself.

"Oh, Polly, I say, Polly!" came a call through the window.

"Yes, Allan."

"Good news, little girl," shouted Mowbray, waving a yellow paper. "Come, read my despatch."

"In a moment."

And the woman, bathing away her tears, looked into the mirror of her dressing table. "There *is* a God, and the Virgin Mary *does* intercede for those who lean upon Her," she said.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SIXTH

IN WHICH POLLY IS BOTH ANGRY AND SAD

"I can't, Allan."

"Why not, Poll?"

"I can't meet Mr. Larned. I'm going away."

"But, Poll, I thought you liked Billy Larned."

"I can't help what you thought. I will not meet him again—never—nor any of his kind."

Her brother-in-law whistled. "It is as I suspected.

"Polly, Polly, don't deny;
I can see it in the eye
Love-lit——"

The reader may not have the rest of the verse, for the indignant Polly gave the rhymster a resounding whack across the cheek. Doubtless, the verse would have been very bad, and one cannot but contemplate the tranquility of the world if many another effusion had been as promptly destroyed.

Mr. Mowbray and his sister-in-law were standing in the huge hall, with high ceilings crossed by beams, which is both dining-room and living-room at Mississquoi House. And, of course, the cause of the altercation had been a telegram from Larned accepting an invitation for the week-end.

"Oh, Allan, I am sorry," cried Polly with impulsive penitence.

Allan roared with laughter. "You are a vicious little woman," he cried, "and shall have your punishment. For

once in my life I will live up to the spirit, if not the letter, of a biblical injunction." And Mowbray, seizing his sister-in-law, kissed her cheek.

Mrs. Mowbray entered the room.

"Marie, Polly has been beating me," exclaimed Allan, "and I kissed her."

"Served her right," answered his wife.

"You think the punishment fitted the crime?" he asked.

"I am sure of it."

"Shouldn't Polly turn the other cheek?" he pressed.

"Yes," answered Mrs. Mowbray, "if you do."

"I am willing to cry quits," answered Allan, rubbing his cheek. "But, Marie, we are going to get into a horrible pickle with Billy Larned. Polly says she is going away. We shan't be able to hold him. He won't be satisfied to spend a week-end with two prosaic creatures like you and me. I am certain he accepted our invitation because he thought Polly would be here. It is almost inviting the man to bring an action against us for false pretences."

"Polly doesn't always mean what she says."

"I said what I meant," stubbornly persisted Polly.

"Polly, please be good, for my sake," said Mowbray soothingly. "Larned is an old friend of mine, and I thought you liked him."

"Did you read this morning's paper?" she asked indignantly.

"Yes," he replied.

"Did you read *that?*" she asked, picking the paper from the table and pointing to a paragraph on the page which lay open. Mowbray took the paper and read aloud:

"The Hon. Mr. Larned has promised to attend the picnic to be held at Badmington Grove on the 21st inst., and will deliver an address on *French-Canada, Rome and North America.* Mr. William Bugle, who is in charge of the arrangements, predicts a record attendance."

Mowbray laid the paper down and looked at his wife and sister-in-law in silence, and then relieved his feelings by a prolonged whistle.

"I didn't know, Polly, honestly, I didn't. I can't understand it. I couldn't have believed he would go in for that sort of thing. Of course, we are on the eve of an election, and politicians will do almost anything to win an election. But this I know: whatever he be politically, Billy Larned is personally as decent as they make them."

"Then there's something wrong in the way they make them," said Polly.

"I can't understand it," repeated Mowbray thoughtfully. "I'll ask him for an explanation."

"If you mention it to him, I shall never speak to you again," said Polly angrily.

"I shan't breathe a word about it," promised Mowbray, "if you will but be agreeable to him while he is here.

"Mr. Larned is to be our guest," remonstrated Mrs. Mowbray.

"Speaking of angels," cried her husband.

Turning to the open door, they saw Larned spring from Trudeau's old trap (which meets the trains) and rapidly run up the steps to the verandah, while Trudeau was struggling with two heavy travelling bags.

"Good old Billy!" cried Mowbray.

"It is good of you to visit us," said Mrs. Mowbray formally.

"What a charming spot," remarked Larned, greeting all three in turn, "and so restful," he added, laying his hat upon the railing of the verandah. "Lucky devil, Mowbray! What a happy life you lead in this beautiful spot!"

"I am happy," declared Mowbray.

"Country life is the ideal life—for those who can afford it," said Larned.

"The sage tells us that no one can afford to live away from a farm after he is forty; and you are—"

"Hush!" cautioned Larned. "Let us not talk of ages."

"Allan is always talking ages," complained Mrs. Mowbray. "Birthdays are his special delight, and counting years his favourite and embarrassing occupation. But I am a neglectful hostess. You are probably ready for tea. I shall have it served at once."

"And that is Mississquoi Lake?" asked Larned, standing up and gazing at a sheet of water which glistened in the distance.

"That is Mississquoi Lake," answered Allan.

"Where the stumps are?" enquired the Minister.

"Where the stumps are," said Mrs. Mowbray, returning and followed by a servant with the tea-tray.

"I must not forget the responsibilities of my Department," said the Minister with a smile. "We shall inspect the lake and investigate the barriers to navigation. You may remember having spoken to me of the neglect of the Public Works Department when we met in London, Mrs. Mowbray. It's my business to remove barriers," he said, turning to Polly, who was sitting apart and had silently taken her tea and a piece of buttered toast.

"Do you succeed?" she asked.

"Invariably," he answered.

Polly raised the tea-cup to her lips and did not continue the conversation.

"Mississquoi Lake," repeated the Minister, turning his eyes again toward the lake. "A beautiful stretch of water."

"It is one of the old routes over which the *voyageurs* paddled and prayed and sang and swore their way to the Northland," commented Mowbray.

"No sugar and no cream," said Larned in answer to a question from Mrs. Mowbray, who was pouring tea. "Will it cause too much bother if I ask for a piece of lemon?"

"Not at all," answered Mrs. Mowbray, directing the servant, who had not withdrawn. "But I always think tea needs sweetening."

"All the world needs sweetening," said Allan, laughingly rubbing his cheek.

"I'm not in on this one," said Larned.

"Not yet," laughed Allan, still rubbing his cheek.

Polly, setting down her cup, half rose from her chair, and then hesitatingly resumed her place.

"Not yet, but soon, I hope," said Larned, again resorting to slang that ought to be foreign to the vocabulary of a Minister of the Crown; and this time both Mr. and Mrs. Mowbray laughed, while Polly flushed with confusion.

"The man with whom I drove over from the station told me that this is the original site of the Masson home in Canada," commented Larned, seeking to change the subject to something less provocative of a mirth which he was not to understand.

"Yes. For many generations our people have lived here," answered Mrs. Mowbray. "Your driver is also a descendant of the early settlers of Canada."

"I had never thought of Ontario having settlements extending back so many generations," commented Larned.

"That is not an unusual error of English-Canadians," remarked Mowbray.

"We are accustomed to think of the United Empire Loyalists as the first who brought civilisation to the land now called Ontario," said Larned.

"We were here first," rejoined Mrs. Mowbray. "Our forefathers made safe the settlement of the British Empire Loyalists."

"A fact we are prone to forget," admitted Larned.

"The Loyalists were our friends and repeatedly protested against our ill-treatment at the hands of latter-day settlers," said Mrs. Mowbray. "It is true the Old Inhabitants and the Loyalists had their differences, but the

Loyalists never quite forgot the services rendered to the Crown by the French in Canada during the Revolution. Our troubles came with the tide of immigration from the United Kingdom and Europe."

"Quite so," agreed Larned.

"And more than that," said Mrs. Mowbray, "our social relations with the Loyalists were usually of an intimate character. In the early days their children spent weeks in our houses and our children weeks in theirs. Then we learned each other's language—and respected each other's culture."

"It is the latter-day immigrants who have pictured us to the world as a race of *habitants,*" added Polly.

"Curious fact, Larned," said Mowbray, "that writers in English picture the farmer of English-Canada and the United States as an intelligent freeholder, and the farmer of French-Canada as little better than a hind."

"I am sure our genealogical trees will stand comparison with those of our neighbours, whether they live in Canada or in the United States," said Mrs. Mowbray.

Mowbray threw a ball of yarn at his wife. "Marie, you are a precious little snob," he cried. "Do you know, Larned, the other day I caught my wife seriously poring over an essay on the blue-blooded scions of Old France who are Canadians."

"I'm sure I'm not ashamed of my interest in the subject," replied Mrs. Mowbray, "and I ask that Mr. Larned suggest to English-Canadian writers that they now and then depict a French-Canadian character who is not smoking a stubby clay pipe and reeking of the stables."

"Speaking French or English *patois,*" added Polly.

"I must confess we have been unfair in that respect," admitted Larned, "but the writers of every language seek the unusual; they thrive upon the picturesque, and your *habitants,* or farmers, have appealed to their imagination. I can well remember a colleague from Western Canada complaining that the Old Country journalists,

upon visiting the prairies, always set the Doukhobor out in front of their pictures, and not infrequently left out the men and women who are mainly responsible for the life of the country. I understand that the matter received the official attention of the authorities."

"We are not ashamed of our *habitants,*" explained Mrs. Mowbray; "but we are ashamed of the picture of them that is presented to the English-speaking world by their compatriots of the English language."

"I really think my wife has put her delicate hand upon a sore spot in the relation of the two nationalities," said Mowbray. "I am told that when the farmers of the two sections of the country met at Ottawa some years ago, they were mutually surprised; the English-Canadian with the French-Canadian's intelligence, and the French-Canadian with the English-Canadian's tolerance."

"Greater intercourse between the nationalities: that is the solution," said Larned.

"Common honesty on the part of English-Canadian politicians and journalists," corrected Polly. "Until we have that, we shall not have peace."

"We have a difficult task in laying the foundations for this great New World country," said Larned, guardedly. "People are pouring in upon us from the four corners of the earth."

"The world is round, Billy; it hasn't any corners," expostulated Mowbray.

"We French-Canadians are often spoken of as immigrants in Ontario," interjected Polly.

"You are only a few miles from Montreal, and it was natural this country should be settled in the day of the French régime," said Larned. "But somehow we think of the first pages of history west of the Ottawa as written by English hands."

"English-Canadian historians have not given us due credit for our part in the early settlement of the Province," replied Polly.

"Your great-grand-sires were an unprogressive lot," said Mowbray banteringly.

"In discovery or war?" asked Polly.

"No," answered Mowbray. "They were top-notchers in both; but they lacked economic sense."

"In the fur trade?" she pressed.

"That was a vagabond's affair," replied Mowbray.

"And so it was painted in the days of the French régime, but it became an eminently respectable business in the hands of the Scotchmen of Montreal."

"You did not till the land," said Mowbray.

"Our fathers did till the lands east and west of the Ottawa," she insisted, "before the coming of the English. They had no export market for their grain and cattle, and it was some years after the American Revolution that one was established. Our ancestors imported cattle and sheep and engaged in all the domestic industries. They discovered the copper deposits of Sudbury and—"

"Polly, don't argue with me," commanded Mowbray in mock sternness. "I refuse to discuss questions of such importance with the weaker sex."

"Then you should not suggest that our people are immigrants in Ontario," replied the angry Polly.

"I'm sure I didn't," answered Mowbray.

"Of course, there *is* migration of French-Canadians from Quebec to Ontario," said Larned.

"Gosh! You're a brave man, Larned," exclaimed Mowbray. "Here am I running for dear life, leading the way to safety, and you coolly lag behind."

"And migration of English-Canadians from Ontario to Quebec," retorted Polly, paying no attention to Mowbray.

"Quite true," agreed Larned.

"We are no more in Ontario now than our natural increase in population since before the days of Confederation," continued Polly.

"We should know these things, if we stopped to think," admitted Larned.

"But so few stop to think nowadays," said Mowbray.

"Or, stopping, prefer to think only in grooves that satisfy self," added Polly.

"I fear we all think in grooves, Miss Masson," replied Larned. "That is the argument for only one nationality in this province."

"You think one groove better than two?"

"Smoother travelling."

"I am not so sure," she replied. "Travelling in a rut wears out the wheels. And besides, we ought to remember that absolute uniformity is impossible. No two look upon the same picture and receive the same impression. Differences there will always be."

"I have to admit that all you say is true," replied Larned. "We are apt to believe our way of looking at things so good that we over-zealously seek to have others adopt it. But we must have a common patriotism in this country."

"Patriotism comes from the heart, not from the head, Mr. Larned," answered Polly. "Is it not reasonable to believe that we French-Canadians dearly love Canada? Can you not imagine that the Massons fairly adore the waters of Mississquoi Lake? We French-Canadians are devoted to the country. It is rank presumption to question our patriotism. If, at times, we are not so loyal to the State as others, it is because a people deprived of its language are never grateful, and sometimes—are—something—else."

For a few moments the little group of tea-drinkers sat in silence. Polly had spoken in tones that carried evidence of intense sincerity, and were full of passion. Mowbray stroked the head of a collie that had settled down at his feet. Larned looked thoughtfully into space and then said:

"My countrymen are following a conviction that a proper national understanding is impossible in a State with diverse tongues."

"And want to force their tongue upon us," suggested Polly. "That is their idea of unity."

"You would not suggest that we should accept yours?"

"Your answer lies in Quebec," she replied, "where we are in the majority. When English-speaking people first came to Canada," she continued, "they came to a British colony that was French-speaking by the grace, if you will, certainly by permission, of Great Britain. They came to find the freedom they had been denied elsewhere, principally in the American Colonies. Let us admit that they would have preferred to live in a country with one language; let us admit that they would have found one language easier to learn than two, and better for business; let us admit all the arguments that are usually advanced for homogeneity, and we have not overcome the fact that homogeneity can be secured only by violating the principle of freedom that English-speaking men came here to preserve."

Polly was speaking under evident strain. There was a rigidity in her body and a pallor in her face that indicated plainly the intensity of the emotion she felt.

"Let's not talk politics," soothingly suggested Mowbray, pressing the awakened collie's head between his hands.

"We can't run away from the situation," replied Larned. "We have to face it and settle it. It has given me concern since we discussed it in Surrey. We English-speaking people have made out a case which, I fear, is grounded upon expediency and our own desires. It has satisfied us. Men readily accept a line of conduct which runs in the direction of their own inclination. We have built our hopes of the future upon one people, alike in language, alike in national aspirations."

"You want to absorb us," said Polly.

"Can you blame us?" asked Larned.

"Indeed, yes, when you do not leave us free to choose."

"If you will admit the purity of our motives, I am quite willing to confess the iniquity of our methods—and their ineffectiveness," answered Larned.

"I fear I am not in a mood for admissions this afternoon," answered Polly, with an apparent effort at calmness.

When tea was over, Mowbray dragged Larned to the stables. "I must insist upon your seeing my Ayrshires in the milking," he had said.

"I am afraid I know little about milking," protested Larned.

"Yet an indignant electorate believes that you politicians have milked the country dry," answered Mowbray jestingly.

"Be that as it may, I assure you we politicians live upon skim milk."

> "'I told them, if 'twas not for me,
> Their freedoms would all go to pot;
> I promised to set them all free,
> But never a farthing I got',"

hummed Mowbray, as the two men disappeared towards the stables.

After they had gone, Polly said to her sister: "He is conceited."

"But clever," replied Mrs. Mowbray.

"Cold."

"It's much too soon to commence dressing for dinner," called Mrs. Mowbray, as her sister left the room. But Polly was not dressing for dinner. For the second time that day she was looking out upon the St. Lawrence, out at the mountains set in a gloriously-coloured sky, and every now and then her eyes turned to the little hill where, in the clear atmosphere, could be seen the crosses that marked the resting-place of her ancestors.

"They are cold, these Protestants," reasoned the woman to herself. "They have created a God in their own image

and their God is cold. To them He is almost a Protestant God, and flouts our worship as superstitious. To them he must be almost an English God, since He wills no place for us who speak French in this our native land.

"There is but one God," she protested; "and yet we think of him differently. To them—He is Almighty God; but to us—He is, and shall always be, *le bon Dieu*. He is Almighty—and he is *le bon Dieu*. He is our God as well as theirs.

"They do not understand," she repeated. "They do not want to understand. Ah—it may be—they cannot understand, since they seek not the Mother's tenderness and yearn not for Her sympathy. Have they ever fully realised the wondrous breadth of God's love? We cannot expect from them that which they may not have."

There may be those who think Miss Masson had no authority for her reasoning. There may be superior souls who find in her a weakling. With their findings I have no concern, and simply relate what Polly Masson thought as she sat by the window while the sky over the mountains lost its brilliance and the little crosses grew indistinct and vanished in the darkness.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SEVENTH

IN WHICH HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

"Positively."

"But, Polly, there is no other way out of it," reasoned Mrs. Mowbray. "Surely you would not suggest that I should go. You must realise that I have to be here when the Maréchals arrive."

"I know it, Marie."

"And Allan—he cannot leave *The Duchess,* the poor, suffering *Duchess.* What a terrible blow if she should pass away in his absence! The thought of it is too awful for words. Allan says her great kindly eyes stare at him as much as to say: 'Why do you allow me to suffer like this?' You must remember *Lady Jane,* her mother, went the same way. Who knows?—it may be hereditary. No, Allan can't go: that's settled. Milk-fever is a treacherous thing, and requires constant and intelligent nursing. We really cannot afford the chance of losing the best cow in our herd."

"I know, Marie. But what am I to do?"

"Polly!"

"Mr. Larned will have to wait for the Grand Trunk in the morning; I shall not take him across the lake this afternoon."

"He has had an urgent message from Sir Henry Bateman, asking for his immediate return. I am sure I don't care for Sir Henry any more than you do; but the Prime Minister is the Prime Minister and, after all, I suppose Government business is Government business."

"I don't give a hang for Sir Henry or the Government, and I'm not going to take Mr. Larned across the lake."

"Polly Masson, you are never anxious to keep Mr. Larned here, because—"

Polly Masson's eyes flashed with fire.

"Marie, that is unworthy of you," she said.

"What is unworthy?" asked her sister.

"What you were going to say," answered Polly indignantly.

"Well, Polly, I declare I can't make you out since we returned from England. You have been blaming me for everything I have said, and now you are commencing to blame me for things I haven't said," and Mrs. Mowbray turned away.

"I'll go, sister mine. Please don't worry," begged Polly, who invariably yielded when her sister showed signs of distress.

The week-end had not been a success. Miss Masson had disappeared after Sunday's dinner, and returning late in the afternoon, announced sundry unimportant calls upon villagers. Mowbray had been called to the stables by an anxious herdsman, and Mrs. Mowbray, feeling her sister's desertion, and struggling to entertain her guest, had succeeded in making both Larned and herself keenly conscious of embarrassment. Then had arrived the summons to Ottawa for the following morning, and with it the question of train connections.

An half hour later a gasoline launch was ploughing its way up the winding twenty-mile stretch to the station at the head of the lake, where Larned hoped to catch the flyer for Ottawa. Polly held the wheel, now and then bending over the smoothly-running machinery, and with deft hand made her adjustments.

"It's good of you to help me out," began Larned formally.

"It's nothing," she told him.

"It has been a treat to experience home-life," he said, after an awkward silence. "The reformers should really pay some attention to the needs of politicians. Between the trains, the hotels, and the 'spare bed-rooms', we politicians deserve a share in their organized activities."

"I suppose you have to work dreadfully hard," she replied.

"It's the running about," he explained. "My secretary told me that last year I had done 40,000 miles of train-travel."

"Yes?"

"A painstaking chap, my secretary," he continued. "He says that at the last election I slept in sixty-four different beds during a three months' campaign. I think we shall have to form a Politicians' Protective Association. This is a day of organisation."

"You have been absorbed in your work."

"Yes," he replied; "it is absorbing work. Politics are like a spider's web, and those caught within the mesh are tightly held."

"I believe you, Mr. Larned. But who are the flies?"

"I am afraid I have not thought my metaphor to a conclusion, Miss Masson. I suppose you mean that we politicians are the spiders and the web is of our own spinning. You are right—in a way. And the flies? Ah, you mean that the French-Canadians are the flies caught in the web of the English-Canadian politics."

Again Polly did not reply.

"Since leaving you in Surrey," he continued, "I have been thinking of the national differences of this country, Miss Masson, and have come to the conclusion that the right is not all on our side. I do not say it is all on your side. But I am convinced that the French language ought to be preserved in all the country taken from the French. And, further, I am convinced that our present laws are designed for its destruction. But the French-Canadians in the Province should learn Eng-

lish, Miss Masson. That seems to be necessary for the good of the French-Canadians themselves, and for the good of the State."

"And you would have the English learn French?" she suggested.

"Yes," answered Larned slowly.

"Something ought to be done."

"What would you suggest?"

"Let us go back where we were before the restrictions were imposed."

"To what purpose? We should probably be but repeating history and some day again arrive where we are to-day," he told her.

"You may be right," she said, after reflection.

"We have to become, as a people, bilingual," he said. "Education ought to mean to Canadians a preparation to understand each other, and, of course, other things as well, but primarily that."

"It will be a big undertaking."

"You didn't find it hard to acquire both languages."

"I can't remember when I didn't know the one as well as the other."

"So I learned in Surrey," he said drily.

"I am afraid I owe you an apology," she laughed.

"It has been long overdue," he said. "No, on second thought, it would be unfair to ask you to apologise for my ignorance. Do you remember that evening well?" he asked.

"It was an awfully long time ago."

"That is why I asked you."

"We had *café parfait* at supper," she said thoughtfully.

"You had four helpings," he charged.

"Only three," she protested, "and they were ever so small."

"So you said then," he replied. "I believe you *do* remember," he added hopefully.

"Are you really going to advocate equal rights in nationality for the French-Canadians?"

Larned's face showed annoyance at Miss Masson's harking back to politics. "Yes," he replied.

"Your hands indicate a mental reservation," she protested gravely.

Larned looked wonderingly at his hands, turned them over and looked at them again, and then, remembering a recent conversation, he asked in amazement, "Do you know Mr. Ken-Lake?"

"Son and heir of the Earl of Whatcombe?" she enquired.

The Minister hesitated. "Yes," he replied.

"I don't know him," answered Polly promptly.

Larned looked at his companion doubtfully. She bent low over her engine. After a pause she asked, "Have you any plan to propose by which bilingualism may be made effective in Ontario, Mr. Larned?"

"I do not pretend to be able to solve so difficult a question in so short a time," he said, still looking at her doubtfully. "The problem has puzzled brighter minds than mine, but I am inclined to think that those brighter minds approached it in an atmosphere of prejudice. Tentatively, I suggest that a working knowledge of both languages be compulsory for the professions, and for the civil service; and, in the meantime, leave all others free to be educated in either language. In time, I am convinced, a knowledge of the two languages will spread. Of course, the matter involves pedagogy, and that is under Provincial jurisdiction. I am in Federal politics, as you know; but we who are in Federal politics must take a stand upon this question. It cannot be avoided. I shall take the first opportunity of announcing my position."

Over Polly's face there passed a puzzled look. Apparently, she doubted her hearing.

"If you will really do that," she said. "I call it just splendid."

"Suicidal—for an English-Canadian. I shall not be returned by East Badmington at the next election."

"Is there no hope that you may carry your electors with you?" she asked.

"None. They belong to the party, and I cannot carry the party. I shall not have its nomination," answered Larned.

"There is the other party."

"With which I am not in accord on other issues, and besides, the policies of the two parties are identical on this question."

"Then your political career is ended."

"Let us hope only interrupted. I shall attempt to overcome prejudice by an appeal to my countrymen's instincts of fair play. That will take time. It may be that I shall never succeed. It may be that I shall go down before the ridicule and execrations of my opponents. If so, I shall have left to me the consolation that there is something better than standing up under false colours."

"You have not much faith in your compatriots' sense of justice."

"No, not quite that," said Larned thoughtfully. "But this is a political matter. My opponents will appeal to the prejudices of the electorate, prejudices that have been built during years of misrepresentation, while I"—and Larned hesitated—"I shall be pleading for a hearing. You are not familiar with practical politics, Miss Masson?"

"No."

"They are built upon appeals to prejudice. Don't think Ontario alone in having prejudice; our Province may possess more than a normal share; but everywhere—in Quebec, the United States, the United Kingdom, everywhere—it is easier to obtain the suffrages of men and women

by pandering to their antagonisms than by appealing to their sense of justice."

"It is rumoured that you are to be our next Prime Minister."

"I shall not be the next Prime Minister," he said. "I may not be even a spider. If a metamorphosis be possible, I am to become a fly," said Larned laughingly.

"It must be a grievous disappointment to see that which you must have hoped for falling away."

"It is," he answered frankly.

"I am sorry, for your sake," said Polly, and within her voice there lay an honest tone of sympathy. "Your career has been so continuously successful."

"It will be my second reverse," said Larned. "As far back as I can remember, I have been interested in politics. Once, as a youngster of eight or nine, I appealed for the suffrage of my playmates. On that occasion I was delivering a speech from the top of a barrel and had almost succeeded in convincing the audience of my fitness to represent them, when"—and Larned laughed softly at the remembrance of his childhood days.

"When—what?" she asked.

"I beg your pardon. When the barrel-head broke and let me in," said Larned. "And my auditors had to call upon the grown-ups to pull me out. I fear, Miss Masson, that another barrel-head is going to break, and it will be some time before I'm pulled out."

"You take your expected fate in good nature."

"I think I have been a good winner," said Larned, "and I hope I shall be a good loser. You know, Miss Masson, I really believe I am a bit of a philosopher, and only philosophers may lose and honestly smile. Many things have contributed to the course I am taking and I want to tell them all to you."

"You are going to speak at a Badmington picnic soon?"

"Yes," he replied wonderingly.

"On the subject of *French-Canada, Rome and North America,*" she said thoughtfully.

"Your information is amazingly accurate," he said, with a look of wonder. "In England you puzzled me; now you have me—" and Larned hesitated for a word.

"Stumped," she suggested pleasantly, and probably thinking of an addition to her vocabulary acquired from Mr. Ken-Lake.

"Flabbergasted," he corrected. "I am not usually inquisitive," he continued, "but I really would like to know the mysterious source of your information. I thought only one man knew of my intention. It was decided only the day before yesterday."

Polly laughed gaily. "Please exonerate me from the charge of communicating with the spirits," she said. "You will find an announcement of your intended address in yesterday morning's paper."

"It is Bugle who has worked the telegraphic spirits," he laughed.

"But why *French-Canada, Rome and North America*?" she asked.

"It covers enough ground?" he suggested.

"Quite enough."

"I thought so—when it was suggested," he said. "And it will attract those who need conversion."

"I think I see what you have in mind," she said reflectively.

"It is my intention to make a frank statement of my views on the subject to those who sent me to Parliament. Apparently they hold the view that the French language and Catholic schools are exotic in this part of the world. Although the immediate difficulty is of Provincial origin, it has, in reality, a wider application. The idea of the crucible is distinctly American; and you may remember my having said in Surrey that we in English-Canada are peculiarly subject to American influence."

"I am beginning to understand."

"There are many things I want to discuss with you," he said. "This is the day when woman's mind must be consulted in politics," and Larned thought for a moment of Mrs. Diggs. "And some of the things I want to talk about are political—and others are not," he added. "I need a confidante. You probably think me selfish in having said so much about myself; and I suppose I am. I have lived to and for myself—and now I want to do something else. Selfish again, you think," he remarked with a smile. "And you will think me more so when you have heard me to the end. Always have I remembered. No, it is unfair to remind you of the night we first met."

The engine of the motor-boat gave a fitful gasp and stopped.

"Stumps?" enquired Larned.

"No," answered Polly, leaning over her engine in alarm. She tried the adjustments and then turned the crank, and with strong arms turned it times again. But the engine remained obdurate. Larned relieved her at the crank and turned and turned — with no more success. Passing his hand over a perspiring brow, he said, "I am sorry I can't be of service." And then picking up a stick, he enquired, "Where is the gasoline tank?"

"There," said Polly shortly, pointing to the bow of the boat. Larned removed the cap, inserted the stick, and having examined it when withdrawn, tragically announced, "We are out of gasoline."

Larned looked at Polly, and Polly looked at Larned.

"History repeats itself," he said.

Polly smiled faintly.

"On land and sea," he continued.

Polly was silent.

"Alone on a derelict," commented Larned cheerfully. "If we are to believe the novel-writers, we are not the first who have been so happily treated by Dame Fortune, Polly."

"Don't."

"I want to tell you something."

"Please, don't tell me anything just now, Mr. Larned. I am not feeling awfully fit. I am not—" and the usually self-possessed Polly was plainly on the verge of tears.

Larned arose as if to comfort her.

"Please, Mr. Larned, please," she protested.

"I want to say something to you, more than I have wanted to say anything to anybody before," he pleaded earnestly; and, as Polly raised her hand forbiddingly, he relapsed silently into his seat.

Daylight passed into twilight while Polly and Larned sat in the small launch on the placid waters of Lac Mississquoi. The day had been warm for the autumn, but darkness brought with it chill. Larned searched the lockers for additional wraps, and finding an oil-skin jacket, placed it gently over Polly's shoulders and returned to his seat. Later he opened the locker and, finding two lanterns, lighted them and hung one at the bow and the other at the stern of the boat.

From the shore to the right came the call of *"Vian, vian, caillette"*. Farmer Raymond's boy was bringing home the cows. Twilight faded into night quickly, as it does in this northern land.

Larned's thoughts went back to the evening when, as a student, he had gaily stepped into fairyland with a winsome sprite. Through the long years of battling for the stern world's power, he had never quite forgotten. He had climbed the stern world's ladder; step after step he had taken with calculated tread. The top rung was now within reach—the summit of his ambition. He had —almost—achieved success. And then Larned looked

at the figure facing the wooded banks of Lac Mississquoi. How unsatisfying was it all, compared with what might have been!

"Vian, vian, vian, caillette." Farmer Raymond's boy was late in bringing home the cows, and his call alone broke the thoughts of the man and woman who silently reviewed life upon the waters of Mississquoi Lake.

. . . . . .

Out of the darkness there came a light, and both fixed their eyes upon it. Nearer and nearer it came. Then they heard the throbbing sound of engines, and across the waters came a call.

"Cheer up, little woman! I'm coming, cheer up!" rang the voice.

As the yacht drew beside the motor-boat, Allan jumped aboard. "Going or coming?" he asked. "Ah, going, thank goodness," he said, as he saw Larned. "I was afraid you were alone," he added, taking Polly by the arm and gently helping her on board the yacht. "I am sorry you lost your train, Larned. *The Duchess* is out of danger, Poll; she's going to get well. Marie is worried out of her senses. Come, boys, get that painter out. Home as quickly as possible!"

While Mowbray was pouring forth his words in rapid succession, Polly had boarded the yacht and immediately retired to its cabin. The men from the farm had soon made fast their line to the launch, and then Allan headed the yacht for Mississquoi House.

. . . . . .

"Remember, Billy, I have a cellar-full," said Mowbray, filling Larned's glass, as the two men sat far into the night in the library of Mississquoi House.

"What are you reading now?" asked Larned.

"Like a lot of other nearly blind men, I have only now found Samuel Butler. Have you read *Erewhon*?"

"No," said Larned.

"There is many a covert lesson in it for you politicians."

"We politicians haven't as much time for reading as you gentlemen of the country."

"I have often thought when reading the country's legislation that its library had been deserted."

"Allan, please don't row with me to-night. I am not feeling like it."

"Have you read *Brown Waters,* by Blake?" asked Mowbray.

"No," said Larned, regretfully. "I have been devoting myself to the troubled waters of politics. What is Blake's book about?"

"It is really the meditations of a man who has eyes and ears that understand people and fish and Nature, and especially interesting to me because written of the frontiers of Quebec."

"By the way, do you know a Mr. Ken-Lake?" asked Larned.

"Tommy Ken-Lake? Of course, I do. His father and mine were old friends. It was through Tommy we went to Surrey. He is one of Polly's English admirers, and a really good sort. Tommy is in Canada now; only left here a few hours before you came."

Larned pursed his lips for a moment, then he asked: "Is he a son of the Earl of Whatcombe?"

"The Earl of Whatcombe?" asked Mowbray. "Never heard of him. Don't believe you'll find such a title in Burke."

"Perhaps there isn't an Earl of Whatcombe," said Larned.

"I say, are you trying to have a joke at my expense?" asked Mowbray.

"No. But I fear someone has had one at mine," answered Larned ruefully.

"Was it Polly?" asked Mowbray.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-EIGHTH

IN WHICH SPADES ARE CALLED SPADES

It was not an ordinary deputation which occasioned Sir Henry's urgent call for his Minister of Public Works. And upon arriving at the Capital, Larned found its business still undispatched. The Prime Minister came from his office as soon as his secretary had announced Larned's arrival.

"It's a devilish awkward situation," he began hurriedly. "I am glad you are here."

"Missed my train yesterday," said Larned shortly.

"I knew you would have come if possible. I wouldn't have sent for you if it had not been positively necessary. We are facing a crisis; we are threatened with the strike of several hundred thousand public servants."

"Good Lord! Have we that many?" exclaimed Larned.

"Yes, and more. The extension of Government-ownership and operation is gradually concentrating the industry of the country under our administration. But there is no time to discuss that now. Let me briefly run over the immediate business in hand. A deputation has arrived demanding a forty-four hour working week, an all-round substantial increase in wages, and the right to have all conditions of employment arranged with a central committee. That is, in brief, the demand. We met yesterday, and our session extended over hours; we have already spent the morning with them. But we should not delay. I left Rooks and Howell with the deputation; they will need our assistance."

Sir Henry introduced Larned to the representatives who had waited upon the Government; and the proceedings, interrupted by the Prime Minister's absence from the room, recommenced. They were solid-looking men, these artisans, baggage-checkers, and postmen, chosen to present the cause of Labour. The last deputation Larned remembered, had happened to consist of bankers; and for grooming, keenness of face and precision of speech, he could not but feel that the present deputation was its equal, certainly not its inferior.

"I think, Sir Henry," said the spokesman, who arose to his feet as the two Ministers entered, "we have now placed the Government in possession of our case. We have told you what we want; we have told you why we want it. The day is at hand when Labour must be admitted to its own. Forty-four hours a week is all any man should work; the remainder of the week is required for recreation. The principle of collective bargaining must be followed to its natural conclusion. Upon that we are fully determined. We are a committee, duly appointed under the credentials submitted, and are authorized to open offices at the Capital. We are to be a permanent institution. Hereafter, all matters affecting Labour are to be discussed and decided with us. Yesterday you intimated your desire to meet us on wages and, so far as we are concerned, there is nothing more to be said."

With these words, the speaker, who was chairman of the deputation, resumed his seat.

Sir Henry looked at his colleagues enquiringly, as if inviting their comment.

"May I, as a newcomer, ask one or two questions?" enquired Larned of the Prime Minister.

"Certainly. That is what we want. The matter is of very considerable importance; it cannot receive too much discussion."

Larned turned to the chairman. "If the Government refuses to accede to your demands in the matter of—let

us say—the committees' representation, then what?" he asked.

"We are instructed to call the men from their work," was the firm reply.

"You treat us as ordinary capitalists."

"Why not? You are operating railways, tramways, hotels; you are running cold-storage warehouses, grain elevators, power-plants, and other things which were at one time operated by private capitalists. Surely the right of Labour to recall its services did not cease when you took possession. Such a contention is unthinkable. If we are denied the right to strike, then we are no longer free."

"We are representing all the people," argued Larned. "Our enterprises are conducted in their behalf. Like you, we are servants of the people. Surely there is a distinction to be drawn between the Government in business and—let us say—a joint-stock company!"

"None, so far as Labour is concerned."

"There is this difference: when men defy their employers, it is called a strike; when they defy their government, it used to be called—a revolution."

"Not nowadays, Mr. Larned," laughed one of the men good-naturedly. Anyway, there isn't much in a name."

"There is much in the name I have just used," replied Larned gravely. "The alternative to ultimate authority is anarchy."

"I object," protested the Honourable Mr. Rooks. "The Minister is using words that are quite uncalled for in this conference."

"How far are you affiliated with Labour organisation beyond the government service?" asked Larned, paying no attention to his colleague's interruption.

"We are in alliance with them," was the reply.

"May I ask if you would feel it quite proper to withdraw the services of—say—the postmen to support a strike of—say—the garment-workers?"

"Certainly. The cause of Labour is common. You must recognise that as fundamental. The day has arrived for the One Big Union, the representatives of which will decide all matters affecting Labour."

"And enforce its decisions by paralysing the country's services?"

"That is within our power; but we hope it will not be necessary. You may be assured we shall resort to such a drastic measure only when absolutely necessary."

"Only when in your judgment it is necessary," suggested Larned.

"Y-e-s," admitted the chairman.

"All public servants are not members of your organisation?"

"No. You are employing men and women who are not organised, and on the railways you have some men who, organised, are not under our jurisdiction. That is a matter we shall ask you to discuss with us later."

"How are you concerned in the welfare of people you do not represent?"

"It is not exactly *their* welfare in which we are concerned, but the terms of their employment naturally affect our own. Labour is a single, living body which must protect itself against the action of all its members. No matter in what part the wound, it must be bound up, or the body will in time bleed to death."

"But the State is also a body, the supreme body. It is made up of Capital, Capitalistic Labour, and Labour. We are charged with protecting all alike, and further, with ensuring that each perform its proper function. Your representation is limited; it does not include even all Labour. The school-teachers, for instance, are not under your jurisdiction."

"No. But they may come in. We hope to have them."

"Nor are the clerks who, in offices, are performing valuable but nondescript work for scanty pay."

"We will make them welcome."

"If it is your aim to represent all society, then you are in reality seeking to set up a new form of Government."

"We aim to represent nothing but the Labour of Society."

"You leave to us the widows and the orphans," suggested Larned.

"And the capitalists. We do not pretend to represent them. We do propose to protect ourselves against them."

"You have no confidence in our disposition to protect Labour. You distrust us."

"We ask for your assistance. That is why we are here."

"No, no, no. You are not asking for our assistance," protested Larned. "You are demanding that we, like a machine, shall register your decisions. If you had come to us saying: 'We believe we are subjected to injustice; we ask that you investigate and correct that injustice'—then you would have been within your rights. I will go further: If you were to have added that unless we corrected it, you would have us removed from office on the next polling day (while I might think you were damnably impolite), I would have to admit that you were within your rights. But you are here with the threat of destroying, or at least weakening, society, if we do not comply with your already made decision, and I say you have trespassed beyond—the rights of citizenship."

The chairman did not reply, and Larned continued: "So far as I am concerned, I shall not be a party to surrendering to any body of men the authority with which the people have entrusted me as their representative."

"We, too, are representatives," the chairman replied. "Remember that."

"Yes. You are representatives. You come speaking to us as one Government addresses another. Then it remains only to determine which is the stronger: those you represent or those we represent. There cannot be

conflicting governments within a single State. That is the crux of the issue."

"You are indulging in plain speech, gentlemen," said Sir Henry. "I had hoped that the conference would proceed in a more conciliatory spirit."

Mr. Rooks smiled blandly at the reproof which Sir Henry had evidently delivered.

"If I may say so, sir, plain speech is what we want," replied the chairman. "There is nothing to be gained by side-stepping. Yesterday we spent nearly the whole day together, and to-day the best of the morning, and for the first time we have found someone who is willing to call a spade a spade."

"And to call revolution, revolution," said Sir Henry gravely. "I think, since it is the wish of the deputation, you had better continue with plain speech, Larned."

"Recently, while travelling in the West," continued Larned, "I overheard some discussions on this subject, and was set thinking as I had never thought before. I would like to go further—if you have no objection—and ask some questions which, although not directly applicable to the object of your deputation, are pertinent to the main issue involved. Am I to understand that you wish to take the direction of Industry from Capital?"

"We want a voice in its direction."

"But, again, is there not such a thing as authority?" asked Larned. "Must not the lead of Industry necessarily remain with Capital?"

"Why?" asked one of the men.

"I do not blame you for challenging my statement, since the doctors of Labour have covered the subject with a froth of words. But when the froth is blown away, is it not true that central direction is necessary? It must rest with either Capital or Labour; it cannot be divided," said Larned. "Labour may represent, may, if necessary, by strike, protest; but Capital must direct. Remember, I am not speaking dogmatically; I am searching for truth.

But I suggest that Labour is largely liquid, and Capital largely fixed. If that be so, then the direction of industry necessarily rests with Capital. If you enter my employment—and for the moment assume that I am financing a printing-plant or a boot and shoe factory—if you direct that business into disaster, you are free to take your Labour elsewhere, but I am ruined. My investment is in good-will and organisation, as well as machinery. I cannot take my capital across the street and with you begin all over, for my capital has been destroyed."

"Capital and Labour must travel together," interposed Sir Henry.

"There must be a lead-horse to the tandem," insisted Larned.

"The present organisation of Society is directed towards the production of Capital," protested one of the men.

"The Government's first consideration should be for Labour," insisted Mr. Rooks. "That is my feeling."

"In a sense you are right," said Larned, speaking to the men and again ignoring his colleague. "The object of industry is the production of Capital; and it is essential to the existence of Government that there be Capital. But we are necessarily interested in Labour, for it is a constituent factor in the production of Capital. Neither you nor we must forget that Labour is a means to an end. Both of us must keep our eyes on that end—if we are to avoid disaster. It is Capital which we, as a people, must produce. Capital is the medium of exchange with foreign countries. We pay our debts and our interest on them with Capital, not with Labour."

"You have left the human element out of your reckoning," protested the chairman. "You are not in touch with the toiling masses. I wish I could take you through the great plants of your own city of Badmington, in which men and women are sweating at their toil; then you would feel the throb of humanity."

"Personally, I do not blame any man for striving to reduce the hours of his labour. But are we, as the trustees for all classes, justified in reducing your hours of labour by lengthening the labouring hours of others? I am told that our farmers work beneath the broiling sun twelve and fourteen hours a day, and even in the winter months not less than ten hours a day."

"We won't do that," asserted one of the men promptly.

"Is there a throb only to the humanity of the town?"

"You are trying to draw us from our argument," said the chairman, showing for the first time evidence of anger. "You can't do it. We won't be led away on a side issue."

"Canada is only one of several countries," continued Larned placidly, "all in active competition. Do not be annoyed when I remind you that we were elected to guard and promote the interest of all Canada. It is primarily an agricultural country; it must compete with other countries in the world's agricultural markets. Should there come a time when this country cannot compete, then it ceases to be solvent. What we, as workers in Canada, may have—and I use the term *workers* in its most general sense—is to be determined not alone by what we want, but *by what we can get* through competing with the men of other lands. We are not a law unto ourselves. Only those countries are really free to do as they please who have shut themselves off from the outside world. And we call them barbaric."

"The eight-hour day is coming the world over," protested one of the men.

"When it comes, then we may have it, and not before," said Larned definitely. "We may introduce it when and as we please, but we cannot maintain it."

The members of the committee laughed scornfully.

"I am afraid you are behind the times, Mr. Larned," said the chairman good-naturedly.

"There is no eight-hour day with a Saturday half-holiday for the farmer," insisted Larned. "I am told he has some work to do even on Sunday."

"Let the farmer establish the eight-hour day."

"But the farmer is not free to work as little or as much as he likes. He has to face a competition against which we are powerless to protect him. By the way, as I think of it, there may be a way out. Would you object if we were to allow the farmers of this country to import Hindu labourers?"

"Yes, sir," shouted the men in unison.

"Why?" asked Larned.

"It is not for us to tell you, Mr. Larned. You know as well as we do that the Hindu will not make a good citizen. He is not on our level. Furthermore, you cannot limit his labour to the land, and we do not propose to compete with him."

"And yet the farmer and his sons must sell their principal product in competition with the product of his labour. It is true there is a difference in the quality of the wheat produced by India and Canada, but the price of the cheaper regulates that of the dearer. India is one of the world's greatest wheat exporters, and Canada has to meet its competition to stay in the running. The hundred-acre farm is the foundation of all our industry. You of the shop cannot compete with the men of the shop elsewhere. At present, fully thirty per cent. of your wages is not earned out of your product; it is contributed by men engaged in unprotected industries under laws passed in the belief that diversified industry is in the general interest of the State. But is any Government justified in compelling men who work ten hours and twelve hours a day to hand over a part of their earnings to men who refuse to work more than eight hours a day?"

"That is for you to decide," said the chairman.

"I am glad you have left something for us to decide," replied Larned grimly. "But are you not, in reality, taking away from us the power to decide even that? Remember, Labour is largely liquid. It flows toward the spot with the shortest hours and highest wages. No law can be devised that will keep free men working sixty hours a

week on the farm while the factory is offering high wages for forty-four hours' work."

"We limit the number of apprentices," explained the chairman.

"You ask us to protect you in the price of your product and then limit the amount of the product," suggested Larned.

"The capitalist does the same thing," argued the chairman. "He has his combinations in restraint of trade."

"If you are right in your contention, then it only serves to prove that both parties who receive protection are withholding production from those who give it at the sacrifice of their own earnings."

"I suppose you are referring to the farmer again," said the chairman. "He must look after himself. We are not concerned with his case."

"But we are; and you ought to be, for if he cannot buy his necessities in this country at a price which will enable him to compete with—say—the Danes, the Russians, and the Hindus, then the factory and the field of Canada are ruined alike. Make no mistake: a country is not economically stronger than its basic industry."

"But the Hindus haven't the up-to-date agricultural machinery our farmers possess."

"Until now we have been preserved by the backwardness of our competitors. But it will not continue. Already great improvements have been made in the agriculture of India and Russia, and more are in progress. Unless they are followed by a substantial increase in the standard of living in those countries, then *all the living standards of this country will be reduced.*"

"Not ours," said one of the men defiantly. "We can find plenty of work in the States."

"We shall be sorry to lose you. But if we cannot support you in the standard of comfort you demand, we cannot support you. That is all there is to it."

"You used the expression 'capitalistic labour' a little while ago, Mr. Larned," said one of the members of the deputation. "Did you mean the farmers?"

"The farmers are capitalists and labourers. They are to be included in the term. But there are many illustrations of men who have invested money in the vocation they follow."

"It is our aim to be capitalistic labourers, as you call them," said the chairman. "*Tool-users must be tool-owners.*"

"I know nothing in our laws to prevent you."

"But we cannot compete with the large aggregations of capital of to-day."

"No. You cannot compete," admitted Larned. "But let us not forget the reason why you cannot compete. Tool-users were once tool-owners, the artisans' ownership having been swept away in the Industrial Revolution. Are we to call the results of that revolution bad? Men have been calling them the foundation-stones of civilisation. The Industrial Revolution brought the factory system and the factory brought specialisation. The process of production was quickened and cheapened, and the men who used the tools (they no longer owned) gained hours for education and recreation that were only dreamed of before the day of the factory. They live in better houses, wear better clothes, and eat better food. But, unfortunately, that is not all. There is another side to the account. There usually is. Specialisation took the joy out of work. And that is wholly sad. No longer does the cabinet-maker have to be reminded of his meal-hours and bed-time. Craftsmanship is gone; we have Labour in its place. But I must not continue in digression. All I ask you to remember is that we can never have the sweet without the bitter."

"That is just the point," interrupted the chairman; "the capitalist has the sweet and we have the bitter."

"I often wonder who are the capitalists," said Larned. "If you mean the men who are financing the industries of

this country, then I tell you they have a deep draught of the bitter, for they owe several hundred million dollars to foreign investors. Do you want to assume those obligations? Do you want to assume the task of borrowing more money when more is required for further extensions of industry? Do you think that the foreign investors would let you have it?"

The chairman shifted his feet uncomfortably. "I am not prepared to answer that question," he replied, as Larned paused for an answer. "This is an age in which co-operation is to succeed competition. All progressive men are agreed upon that."

Larned smiled. "Doubtless you think me a reactionary. Well, that cannot be helped. We have attained our present industrial development through the spur of competition. To abolish it under Democracy is to go back. If it is the will of the people, I have nothing to say; but that will must be exercised at the polls."

At this stage of the conference there was a pause. The men had apparently finished their representations, and as none of the Ministers desired to continue the discussion, Sir Henry arose as if to declare the conference ended.

"I hope we now have a clear understanding of our relative positions," he said. "My Ministers have talked to you frankly and you have been as frank with us. You recognise the importance of the issue and realise that I must take it before all my colleagues in council assembled. We shall not delay our decision, but we must have time for consideration. I must ask you to exercise patience. You owe at least that to the country."

"The men are restive; we cannot hold them much longer," said the chairman, as he, with the others of the deputation, arose to depart.

"What remarkable ideas they have of Government," said Sir Henry, as the door closed behind the last of the visitors. "To think that postmen may go on strike

without creating a defiance of the Government tantamount to revolution! If postmen may strike, then why not soldiers? We cannot admit such an absurd principle."

"Wherein does a postman differ from a section-man on our railways?" asked Larned.

"There is all the difference in the world."

"One is responsible for carrying the letters of His Majesty's subjects, and the other for carrying His Majesty's subjects themselves."

"What has come over you, Larned?" enquired Sir Henry. "You surprised me by your plain speech to-day and now you surprise me again."

"I am trying to free my mind of the cobwebs spun by the spiders of socialism," said Larned, "and have already learned the folly of attempting to preserve mankind by destroying man."

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-NINTH

BETWEEN RACES

THROUGHOUT the strenuous days that followed the conference, Larned found time to think of Polly. Nor were his thoughts confined to the solitude of his bachelor-quarters. They crept upon him in most inopportune places. Once, sitting at the Council table while the Minister of Labour was in the midst of an abstruse argument, he caught himself attempting to sketch her likeness, and with a flush tore the paper into shreds. The sage man of the world who has buried the memories of earlier days beneath thick layers of wisdom, will probably raise his eyebrows reproachfully at the frivolity of a statesman who ought to have had his mind concentrated on grave affairs. And, in truth, Larned felt much the same way. "I have become a silly school-boy," he said to himself, and straightway began to think of Polly again. He had not seen her on the morning of his departure from Mississquoi House. Pleading an indisposition, she had remained in her room; and the chill of the previous evening had given her an excuse that was more than conventional.

It had been his intention to write Polly immediately upon his return to the Capital, but four days passed before he succeeded in penning anything to his satisfaction; and then, in sheer desperation, he mailed the following:

"My dear Miss Masson:

"A thousand apologies for having been the cause of so much discomfort to you on my recent visit to Mississquoi House. Each day, since then, I have written expressing my grief, and as regularly my letters have been consigned to that mysterious place

into which all Government waste-paper baskets are out-turned. Regretfully I have decided that, as a letter writer, I am an egregious failure.

"As you may have learned, I called you on the telephone, but unfortunately you were out on the farm and could not be located. In speaking to your sister, I learned that you had recovered from your indisposition; for that I am thankful. Possibly I could have said over the telephone what I have failed to put upon paper. No, that would have been impossible. Nothing will serve my purpose but the earliest possible opportunity of telling you in person that which my hand awkwardly refuses to transcribe.

"Yours devotedly,

"LARNED."

No sooner had Larned (usually particular and cautious) dropped the flap of the post-box upon his letter, than he wished it recalled, and even wondered if he should not use his influence with the Postmaster-General to have it removed from the mails. A moment's reflection served to convince him that such a request would lay him bare to ridicule.

He had kept his engagement at the picnic arranged by the energetic Mr. Bugle, and upon returning had enquired for his personal mail, and was disappointed in not finding within it a letter answering his own. Fatigued with work and tired with train-travel, he had readily accepted the suggestion of Howell that they should spend the afternoon at the races. Together the two Ministers were strolling across the lawn of the Connaught Course, when Larned started at the sight of a familiar figure of a woman rising from one of the boxes. Graceful and lithe she stood, with back turned towards him; arms raised, and glasses in hand, she was watching a runaway horse which was playing tag with several boys of the stable at the eastern end of the course. The figure was that of Polly Masson, and with her were the Mowbrays.

"Pardon me, Howell," said Larned to his colleague, "but I see some friends in a box, to whom I must pay my respects."

"Who are they?"

"The Mowbrays."

"That is Allan Mowbray," commented the Bad Man, looking towards the box to which Larned's eyes were directed. "I have met him. I will go with you. He has a horse in the jumping event, and I need some inside information if I am to pay my expenses this afternoon," he continued, as the two Ministers made their way up the aisle. There were vacant seats in the box, which, after Howell had been presented to the ladies, they occupied on Mrs. Mowbray's invitation.

"Mowbray, what are your horse's chances to win the jumping event?" asked Howell.

"*Mouche à Feu* ought to win, but one can never tell what will happen in a jumping event?" answered Allan.

"I had thought of making a small wager on him."

"He is worth it. I'm putting fifty on him myself."

"A word to the wise," said Howell knowingly.

"But, Allan, Mr. Howell ought to be told that your wagering on *Mouche à Feu* should be a warning, rather than an encouragement," said Marie. "My husband is the unluckiest of mortals," she explained.

"I would hardly say that, Marie. It is true I haven't won a bet out of my last twelve; but—"

"I thought *Mouche à Feu* had won a big stake at Badmington last week," expostulated Howell.

"He did; and for the first time this year, I had nothing on him," confessed Mowbray mournfully. "There are three horses from my stable on circuit this season, and until *Mouche à Feu* went across, I hadn't won a purse. I was thinking of withdrawing from the track and sticking to the meadow. Cows are more in my line. They are not as fast as horses, but they are safer. If I had been at Badmington I should have won a young fortune; but I wasn't there."

"I wanted you to go, Allan," protested Mrs. Mowbray.

"And refused to go with me. That is fine encouragement."

"Allan says he can't trust himself out after dark, now that we have prohibition," laughed Mrs. Mowbray.

"Did you receive my letter?" Larned had asked Polly while the others were talking of the Mowbray fortunes and misfortunes on the racetrack.

"It came just as we were leaving yesterday afternoon."

"And you answered it in person?"

"We thought you were in Badmington."

"Isn't that a little uncalled for?" he expostulated. "You might have allowed me to believe that my presence was at least partly the cause of your visit to the Capital. Surely it was quite unnecessary to intimate that you came because you thought me elsewhere."

"But you were at the picnic."

"I arrived home this morning."

"Was your speech a success? The morning papers gave a skimpy account of it."

"The picnic was a purely local affair," he explained. "Even the Badmington papers will not report fully its speeches."

"Talking politics, Miss Masson?" asked Howell, turning to the rear seats in which sat Polly and Larned together. "If you have influence over Larned, please give him the curtain-lecture he deserves for his speech of yesterday."

"Do not expect the girls to restrain Larned from defending the French-Canadians. They will only abet him," cried Mowbray. "This morning my sister-in-law looked greedily for the paper, and I am convinced was disappointed at finding Larned had not been mobbed."

"Allan!" expostulated Marie.

"Perhaps I did put it rather strongly, but Polly certainly grabbed the paper from my hand and turned and turned until she came to the account of the picnic; and you read it as eagerly as she did. I know, for I peeked

over your shoulders. The girls are French-Canadians, Mr. Howell."

"I know their nationality," laughed Howell. "But I am sure they will understand what Larned has apparently forgotten: the intimate relation between politics and geography."

"How was the speech received, Mr. Howell?" asked Polly. "Were you at the picnic?"

"I was there, but never again will I go to a picnic without enquiring if it is on the cards that one of my friends is to commit political suicide. My nerves won't stand it."

"Surely it was not as bad as that!" said Mowbray.

"Well, I will say for Larned that few powder-magazines have been touched off more skilfully."

"Tell us about it," asked Polly.

"Well, Larned lighted his train on the Irish question," began Howell. "Carefully he explained to his audience the mental attitude of the Protestant minority in Ireland, the depth of regard in which they held their Church and schools; the natural reluctance to have their national institutions placed under the direction of a Catholic majority with different views on Church and School. Then he expatiated upon the helplessness of the men and women who had the will but not the votes to maintain a national and religious consciousness; and insisted that if Civilisation stood for anything, it was protection of minorities. The spirit of bending all to the will and way of the majority, was incompatible with Civilisation. If it be true that Democracy meant the right of the many to destroy the institutions of the few, then—Larned contended—Civilisation demanded something better than Democracy. The great weakness of the science of government under Democracy, according to Larned, lay in not having established a means by which a minority may be protected against the majority. He brushed aside all the old causes of feud between the nationalities in Ireland. One had to

take conditions as they were. And the outstanding fact was that in Ireland there were two peoples with different outlooks upon life. One of them, the weaker in numbers, had been holding the hand of its kindred across the channel, and feared to let go, dreading the uncertainty of the future. 'There must be a way out,' he argued. National minorities were not to be consigned to destruction. That was a cruelty inconsistent with the professions of Civilisation and Christianity alike. Slowly men were finding that safety lay only in the principle that Government was, in essence, a trusteeship; and only those governments were entitled to rank as civilised where the national and religious aspirations of weak, as well as strong, were preserved. 'What was the assurance that the majority in Ireland would accept that principle?' he asked. 'It is true England had admitted it and practised it in Wales,' he conceded, 'where a million men spoke a tongue that is not English and a quarter of a million people spoke no English. No treaty rights protected the Welsh. They had been preserved under the principle that where a people willed to live, they deserved to live. From Wales, Larned jumped across the Atlantic and landed with one hand outstretched towards Ontario and the other towards Manitoba. The comparisons he drew are obvious. The audience had accepted with cheers his doctrine of minority rights in Ireland and stuffed out its chest at the thought of England's recognition of it in Wales; it could not catch its breath in time to deny the doctrine as applied to the French-Canadians in Ontario and Manitoba. It was a good speech, and if I had not been in the business of vote-getting, I daresay I should have enjoyed it. It would have been an excellent speech on the banks of the Ottawa; but it was entirely out of place in Badmington. A good speech delivered in the wrong place: that is my verdict. But look, Mowbray, the horses have gone to the post. I am going into the paddock to have a look at yours. He will soon be out, and your past bad luck rather encourages me to duplicate the fifty you intend to bet upon him."

"I didn't think you were such an attentive listener, Howell," laughed Larned.

"I couldn't help myself," explained his colleague.

"But I say, Larned, you are away out on the Irish question. The majority would do the fair thing by the minority," protested Mowbray, rising from his seat at the suggestion of a visit to the paddock. "The Catholics of Ireland are civilised; and, even if at any time they wanted to oppress the minority, it would be impossible. The constitution would protect the Protestants."

"A Protestant majority of English descent once broke a constitution in Manitoba," suggested Howell, "and all the King's men couldn't put it together again. Are we to expect Irish Catholics to have more regard for the rights of a helpless minority than we ourselves possess?"

"The French-Catholics respect them in Quebec," snapped Polly.

"You will dine with me to-night?" asked Larned as Mowbray and Howell were departing.

"Sorry, old man," called Allan. "But we are leaving for home immediately after the last race, and will have our dinner on the train. Marie will explain how we are booked up."

"Yes, Mr. Larned," said Mrs. Mowbray. "We really should not be here, for we have friends arriving to-night; but Allan was anxious to see his horse perform and insisted that Polly and I should go with him."

"I am awfully disappointed," replied Larned. "I had looked forward to a jolly little dinner-party this evening. Are you sure that we cannot telephone or wire, or do something that will make it possible for you to stay over night? Isn't there a later train?"

"It is quite impossible," said Mrs. Mowbray.

"When am I to see you again?" asked Larned.

"Any week-end. We keep open house in the country. You are always welcome at Mississquoi House."

"Any time means no time," he complained.

"Not with us," insisted Mrs. Mowbray. "Isn't that Sir Henry coming up the aisle?"

"He is coming to your box," predicted Larned, rising as the Prime Minister approached.

"Ah, Mrs. Mowbray, and Miss Masson," began Sir Henry, "I am delighted to see you at the Capital. You have not forgotten me, I hope. You may remember we crossed the Atlantic together some three years ago. I hope Mr. Larned is taking good care of your purses. Investments at the racetrack are notoriously precarious, you know."

"Won't you be seated, Sir Henry?" invited Mrs. Mowbray.

"I cannot stay more than a minute or two," replied Sir Henry. "Lady Bateman is alone. She sent me to ask you to join us in tea at the club-house after this race. I met your husband and Mr. Howell on the way over, and they are coming. They have gone to look at some horses in the paddock."

"I am sure we shall be delighted to accept Lady Bateman's invitation," said Mrs. Mowbray, glancing at her sister and Larned. "It is kind of Lady Bateman to have thought of us."

CHAPTER THE THIRTIETH

LARNED TALKS POLITICS WHILE MOUCHE A FEU WINS A RACE

"MARIE, isn't that Alice Castleman?" asked Polly, as Lady Castleman and her niece entered the tea-room and occupied a table on the opposite side of the room to that around which sat Lady Bateman, Mrs. Mowbray, Polly, Sir Henry, and Larned, who, surrendering hope that Allan and Howell would return in time for tea, had ordered their own.

"It *is* Alice Castleman," agreed her sister. "What a little world we live in."

"You are acquainted with Miss Castleman?" commented Lady Bateman.

"We were in Italy together, shortly after leaving school," explained Polly. "She was a delightful companion."

"She is a charming girl," agreed Lady Bateman.

"But I did not connect her name with that of Lady Castleman," said Polly. "I have always thought Alice an Englishwoman."

"Lady Castleman is her aunt by marriage, the widow of her father's brother, the late Sir Herbert, who, so far as I know, was the only one of the family that came to Canada. Miss Castleman was reared in Dublin," explained Lady Bateman.

Polly caught Alice's eyes, and the two smiled in pleasant recognition.

"Sir Henry, will you ask Lady Castleman and her niece to join us at tea?" asked Lady Bateman.

"May I take the message?" volunteered Larned.

"If you will," said Lady Bateman, looking at him with a curious smile. Larned returned with the two ladies, and between Alice, Polly, and Marie, warm greetings were exchanged, followed by a voluble conversation in French.

"You are looking better than I had expected, Kate," began Lady Castleman. "Someone told me that you were not up to the mark, and evidently needed a change. It was Mrs. Rooks, I think."

"I am not ready for a change just at present," replied Lady Bateman pleasantly.

"Oh, I wouldn't for the world have you think from anything I said that Mrs. Rooks was thinking of politics," protested Lady Castleman; "but, of course, you can never tell," she added thoughtfully. "It's a perfect age since I have seen you. But I have been on the go ever since Alice came."

"Your niece apparently speaks French fluently, Lady Castleman," said Sir Henry.

"Languages come easily to the Castlemans. My husband, poor Sir Herbert, was fond of speaking French."

"Now that you mention it, I recall that he used to make election campaigns in Quebec," replied Sir Henry, "and won considerable fame there as a speaker. Sir Herbert was an accomplished orator of the old school. It was less noisy, but more accomplished, than that of to-day. By the way, it seems to me that I was informed you were having his memoirs published. Apparently, you did not proceed with the work, as I have heard nothing of it since."

"Sir Herbert devoted not less than an hour a day to his diary," replied Lady Castleman, "and always intended that after his death it should be published. I have been putting it off for years. Memoirs are so frightfully boring. But recently, my conscience bothered me—for

you must know I have a conscience—and I engaged a young man to go over the papers to see what could be done with them. And it was then that I found Sir Herbert had been most disorderly in his comments, mixing imperialism, socialism, trade unionism, agrarianism, nationalism, and all the other "isms" in a common pot with religion and politics. I have read quite a few pages of the diary myself, and the good Lord himself couldn't tell where the religion left off and the politics began. That young man must have worked for fully three months over those papers, and finally gave up in despair. He pronounced the diary to be nothing but a *pot-pourri.*"

"That may be," said Sir Henry, "but apparently it records politics as they are. Over the politician's last are stretched the various fabrics in the life of a people: their labours, their buying and selling, their going and coming, their savings, their dissipations, their religion; all their passions and their sentiments. You call the diary a *pot-pourri;* you are probably right, for Sir Herbert had clear eyes and the courage to record things as he saw them."

"Did Sir Herbert include the tender sentiment?" asked Lady Bateman.

"Here and there are passages of love," replied Lady Castleman, "but it is the cold, awkward love of a politician. Poor Sir Herbert was at heart a pessimist. No good could have come from publishing his views," she insisted. "The other day I turned over several of his pages, and their reading actually made me shiver. He was deploring the migration of English-speaking people from the land and, with his usual thoroughness, went back to the dawn of civilisation. He would have gone to Adam; but he didn't believe in Adam, nor for that matter in Eve. I never knew a man who could go further back than Sir Herbert. He always began at the beginning and never let up until he had reached the other end. He blamed Babylon or was it Nineveh? for the downfall of the Assyrian Empire, Athens for the destruction of Greece, and had pages upon the certainty with which

Carthage pursued its course to destruction; Rome had drained the vitality of its Empire; and he predicted the lecherous town would eventually suck dry the life blood of Great Britain. Poor Sir Herbert's diary makes morbid reading, Sir Henry; it wouldn't catch the popular fancy. People don't want that sort of thing these days."

"May I have access to the diary, Lady Castleman?" asked Larned.

"Certainly, if you think it will be interesting."

"When out West several weeks ago," said Larned, "I met a curious character who told me he was called *The Man with the Sponge.* He maintained that science established the city to be the shambles of a race, and further, that Government paternalism to which Sir Henry has just referred, was legislating people into the shambles. I thought at the time he was going much too far, and am surprised to learn that so able a man as Sir Herbert apparently held the same view. *The Man with the Sponge* asserted that if the city were not recruited from the country, it could not perpetuate itself beyond three or four generations. If that be true, the future is dark for the English-speaking people, since our cities have already outgrown their breeding grounds. There are not more than ten million English-speaking men, women, and children left on the farms of Greater Britain."

"Surely your figures are wrong," protested the Prime Minister.

"I shall not weary you with them now; but if you care to have figures, they are at your service. It may be sufficient to remind you that in Australia sixty-five per cent. of the people are living in three cities; in the United Kingdom there are more at the capital alone than there are on the farms of England, Scotland, and Wales. You are familiar with the situation in Canada, and will probably agree that here there are fewer than a million and a half English-speaking men, women and children on the land. There is a negligible number speaking English on the land in South Africa, India, Newfoundland. If *The*

Man with the Sponge be right, then the race cannot survive beyond the present century."

"Let us talk about something more cheerful," suggested Lady Castleman. "Kate, for Heaven's sake look at Madame La Fortune's hat. It is fairly shrieking at her gown. Strange, isn't it, that some people are born with no sense of colour-harmony?"

Polly's face grew scarlet at the thought that the remark was intended as a reflection upon the taste of the women of her nationality. As it happened, however, Madame La Fortune's dress and hat were of the colours worn by the hostess. Lady Bateman did not reply. "I have forgotten your slice of lemon," she said, turning to Larned.

"I rather like the colour combination, Aunt Castleman," protested her niece, who, with the sisters, had been following the conversation. "But please don't interrupt Mr. Larned. Are you not interested in the future of our race?"

"Of course, I am," replied Lady Castleman easily. "I am Anglican to the core. I sing *God Save the King* and *Rule Britannia* with the best of them. But I don't propose to live on a farm, not even to save the whole Anglo-Saxon race from perdition."

"What is the Government going to do about it?" Mrs. Mowbray asked Sir Henry in alarm. "It would be a calamity if the Anglo-Saxon race became extinct."

"I don't know, my dear lady. This is Larned's theory, not mine. I am as interested as you are in learning what he has to suggest."

"Doesn't the remedy lie in free-trade?" she persisted. "That is my husband's sovereign cure for all the country's ills."

"But England is a free-trade country," said Sir Henry, "and England is more urban than Canada. No, the solution does not lie in the customs tariff. Come, tell us what it is, Larned."

"The sponge," answered Larned gravely. "I have only begun my studies," he warned them; "but *The Man with*

the Sponge appeared to be convinced that Nature or God has provided that those who leave the soil perish away from the soil. Lord Leverhulme makes fine reading of a theory that men ought to work not more than six hours a day, and spend the rest of the time washed-up and dressed-up for recreation; but I suspect Sir Herbert Castleman found that was just what had been done by the people of Nineveh, Athens, Carthage, and Rome. Maybe old Mother Earth intended us to be smeared with her soil. Sir Henry has said that the tariff is not the cause of the migration to the city. Well, this much we know: In England the townsman does not favour protection. He knows it will bring a dear loaf. English sentiment favours free-trade, for protection would make dear the produce of the fields; Canadian sentiment favours protection, for free-trade would make cheap the products of the factory. The National Policy of English-speaking countries is everywhere the same; it may be free-trade here and protection there; but always is its effect to populate the urban Kingdom of Mammon."

"The aim at home has been to divide the land into small holdings," explained Alice.

"That may have been the aim, but has it been the result?" asked Larned. "I confess I have not followed the effects of recent legislation in that behalf, but I should be surprised to learn that it is successful. Is it not possible that at the bottom of the well lies the discontent of the English-speaking man with the bread and cheese living to be won from the land. We have many of your countrymen in Canada, Miss Castleman. They may have small holdings or large holdings here for the asking; but rarely do they ask. If they had land-hunger when they left home, it is apparently satiated after a sea-voyage."

"I shall have to keep an eye on you, Larned," laughed the Prime Minister. "I trust you will confine your theories for the tea-room of the Jockey Club. There would be the deuce to pay if you exposed them in Parliament."

"But what is the answer, Sir Henry?" asked Alice.

"It is a very big question, my dear lady," replied the Prime Minister evasively. "It involves not merely economic, but social considerations as well."

"Do you agree with that, Mr. Larned?" pressed Alice.

The two Ministers laughed heartily.

"You must not bring me into collision with my leader," protested Larned. "It is a big question, as Sir Henry says, involving social and economic consideration. But the two are not to be separated, as some would have us believe. The high wages and short hours of the town have drawn the cobblers, waggon-makers, harness-makers, and grist-millers, and their families from *the four corners*. The farmer's son followed the harness-maker's daughter; the harness-maker's son wooed the farmer's daughter. The children of both families were city-born. Comfort, an irrisistible magnet for humanity, draws citywards. Crying out that it cannot live under protection in England or without protection in Canada, the city is all the while in possession of paved roadways, house-comforts, amusements, and a hundred other things which the country-side cannot afford."

"Do you mean to say that we English-speaking people do not produce enough food to feed ourselves?" asked Lady Bateman, who had been silently, but attentively, following the conversation.

"It was estimated before the Great War that Germany, with less than twice England's population, had seventeen working hands on her land to England's one; there were nearly twice as many German hands on German lands as there are English hands on all the lands of the United Kingdom, the British Dominions and the Colonies, and yet Germany could not feed herself. We have not only lost the disposition to grow our own food; we have allowed the land to pass out of our hands; and some day we shall have lost the art of producing food. However, if *The Man with the Sponge* be right, that should cause us no concern, for after a few generations we shall not need food."

"What would happen if the people of other races were to withhold our food supplies?" she asked.

"We should grow hungry—and die—unless we were able to use the products of our shops to compel them to supply us."

"But suppose they refuse to trade?" suggested Alice.

"I wasn't thinking of shop products in which men trade," replied Larned dryly.

"Good old *Mouche à Feu!*" cried Polly, as Allan with Howell coming hurriedly over to the table interrupted the discussion. "I knew he would win to-day."

"Who told you he had won?" asked Allan.

"Stupid! As if I couldn't read it in your eyes."

"Well, he did win all right. Fournier gave him a splendid ride."

"It was a clever piece of work," corroborated Howell.

"I shall send for a fresh pot of tea," said Lady Bateman. "It seems a pity to celebrate such a glorious occasion in tea, but it can't be helped."

"I'm sorry I didn't see the race," said Mrs. Mowbray; "but we have been listening to an interesting discussion on politics."

"Listening!" exclaimed Mowbray. "I'll wager all I have made on *Mouche à Feu* that you and Polly have been talking on the school question like Dutch aunts, to that part of the Cabinet that couldn't escape."

"Sir Henry, we appeal to you," said Mrs. Mowbray.

"I assure you, Mr. Mowbray, that the ladies of your household have hardly uttered a word. Larned and I have done all the talking," replied the Prime Minister.

"The money is yours," replied Allan promptly, "and it ought to be a biggish chunk, for apparently the public had little confidence in my stable."

"Marie, we divide the spoils," insisted Polly. "My silent tongue helped you win them."

"I must apologise for monopolising the conversation," said Larned in evident embarrassment. "My dry politics have kept you from seeing the race."

"Not at all, Mr. Larned," expostulated Mrs. Mowbray. "I wanted to see *Mouche à Feu;* but, to tell the truth, since we lost a horse in the hurdles some years ago, I have been timid about watching a jumping event. Oh, Alice. Pardon me, I haven't introduced my husband. Of course, you know Mr. Howell."

"What have you been talking about that was more interesting than horse-racing?" asked Allan, as the introductions over, he accepted from Lady Bateman a cup of tea.

"Mr. Larned is a free-trader," answered Alice, "and has been telling us that the English-speaking people have been driven from the land."

"Hold on, Miss Castleman!" cried Larned laughingly. "You commit me beyond my will. Did I not tell you that I was relating the views of a man I had met on the train?"

"Do you not believe all you have said?" she asked in surprise.

"Don't pay too much attention to what Larned says away from Parliament and the hustings, Miss Castleman," advised Mr. Howell. "He knows better than anyone else the value of protection in politics."

"But if what Mr. Larned said the man on the train said, is true, then the situation is distressing."

"Larned has put only one side of the case," replied Sir Henry. "The other day I was discussing the subject with one of our agricultural experts, and he assured me that the farmers were most slovenly in their methods of cultivation. He maintains that, with proper methods, two blades of grass and two kernels of wheat can be made to grow where there is one to-day. For years our Department of Agriculture has been patiently and continuously attempting to spread the gospel of scientific agriculture."

"I think I know the man you refer to," said Mowbray. "At any rate, some years ago I heard one of your officials

make the same statement at a meeting in our district. He appeared to be greatly worried over the farmer's slowness in accepting the principles of scientific agriculture, and when the addresses were ended I thought to help him out by suggesting a plan of education; but he hasn't adopted it yet."

"What was it?" asked Sir Henry.

"That he should himself, over a period of years, farm an ordinary holding, make it pay the profits he predicted for others, and then tell us how he did it."

"It seems awfully sensible," said Lady Bateman. "I wonder why he didn't do it."

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Larned drove with the Mowbrays to the train and, catching a moment with Polly alone, suggested that he hoped to spend the week-end at Mississquoi House. Something in her manner made him press for an expression of opinion as to the desirability of the visit.

"Marie and Allan will be glad to have you," she replied.

"And you?" he suggested.

"I shall not be at home," she said deliberately.

There was no time to enquire as to the reason, for even while she was speaking the train was moving out of the station.

CHAPTER THE THIRTY-FIRST

IN WHICH MR. CLUCKSTON REAPPEARS

"Allan, Polly's gone," said Marie, coming hurriedly into the library where sat Mowbray and Larned.

"Gone! Gone where?"

"I don't know," said Mrs. Mowbray, handing a note to her husband. He glanced it over and then read aloud, translating from French to English:

"Dear Marie and Allan:—

"I am going away. I need a rest. The world seems wobbly, and I must get a footing. I'll be all right in a few days, and when endurable will return. Make the best explanation you can to Mr. Larned.

"P. M."

"What shall we do?" cried Mrs. Mowbray, as Allan finished his reading.

Mowbray drew his wife to the arm of his chair. "Don't worry, my dear. "Polly'll be all right," he assured her. "She'll be back in a few days. I suspect I am partly to blame. She hasn't been herself for some time past. She has been overwrought and nervous, and I—I haven't been altogether decent to her; in fact, I have been an obnoxious, teasing brute," he said regretfully.

"But why should she have gone away without telling us of her intention?" complained Marie. "It isn't like Polly. She is usually so sensible."

And then Larned gave an explanation which threw the required light upon the sudden disappearance of Miss Masson. He told the Mowbrays frankly of her an-

nounced intention of being away on the week-end. He told them of having called the farm on the telephone and finding that they were spending the day in Montreal, that Polly was in the village, and upon being assured by the housekeeper that all three would be home for the week-end, he had ventured to accept Mrs. Mowbray's somewhat indefinite invitation. He did not tell them that for some hours he had debated within the solitude of his library the advisability of the visit; that he had attempted to become immersed in Rider Haggard's *Rural Denmark,* and thrown it aside for the *Reports of the Dominions Royal Commission,* only to find their pages less interesting, and pitching the heavy volume to the floor and hastily grasping his travelling-bag, he had then made for the train.

At the wayside station from which Mississquoi House is reached, he had met the Mowbrays alighting from the Montreal train. Together they had journeyed to the farm, only to find shortly after arriving that Polly had left, apparently upon learning of Larned's intended visit.

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On the following morning Larned was again travelling by train. He sat in the drawing-room of a Delaware & Hudson car, impatiently watching the telegraph poles slowly pass by (as it seemed to him) on their way from New York to Montreal.

There was a tapping at the door of the drawing-room. "Come in," called Larned.

"May I?" asked the voice of Mr. Cluckston as the door opened. The reader may remember Cluckston as the overseas agent of the industrious Benjamin Body.

"I don't want to intrude upon your privacy, but I do want to talk to you about an important matter," said Cluckston, handing the Minister his card.

Larned looked at the card curiously. "Be seated," he invited, not unkindly. "I have met you before," he said.

"Well, well. What a remarkable memory," commented Cluckston admiringly. "It was on the occasion of

my last visit to Canada in the interests of the Society for the Promotion of Anglo-Saxon Unity."

"No," said the Minister. "We did not discuss the affairs of that society."

Cluckston was evidently nonplussed, and pulling from his pocket a reference book, rapidly scanned its indexed pages.

"Well, well. You are right," Mr. Larned," he said, after a few moments. Re-mark-able!" he repeated, pausing between syllables. "I should have sworn that I had interviewed you in connection with the Society for the Promotion of Anglo-Saxon Unity."

"Let me see," said Larned, apparently struggling to recall the occasion of the meeting, by looking out of the car-window.

"It was in connection with the formation of our Imperial Over-Land Clubs."

"No," replied Larned firmly. "It was not that."

Cluckston pulled another note-book from his pocket, and after consulting its pages again, he said, "What a re-mark-able memory! I say, it's almost uncanny," he assured Mr. Larned. "Really it is. Now, I should have sworn that I had interviewed you about the Over-Lands; but my book proves you right, and me wrong. But I want to discuss a matter with you, a most important matter," continued Cluckston, dropping into a tone which men assume in discussing great business. "I have been waiting in Ottawa for you, Mr. Larned, in connection with a work which we confidently feel is destined to cement the several parts of the Empire in indissoluble—"

The Minister interrupted him. "Oh, I know what it was," he said triumphantly. "You called upon me in connection with the Society for Promoting Trade within the Empire."

Cluckston pressed his hands against his forehead and then pressed them against his pockets. "I remember. I remember now. What a re-mark-able memory," he

repeated, this time pausing longer than usual between his syllables. "But as I was about to say," and again did Cluckston adopt the air of great business, "our present movement is founded upon a recognition of the accepted principles of psychology. I assume you recognise that Anglo-Saxon men are primarily sportsmen. Primarily sportsmen," repeated Cluckston, pausing with fine dramatic effect, to allow Mr. Larned an opportunity of appreciating the full significance of the declaration.

"If you will think of it for a moment; cricket, football, base-ball, and golf, are the distinctive possessions of Anglo-Saxon people. And further," continued Cluckston, hurrying over his words, as he caught a sign of interruption in Mr. Larned's eyes: "Anglo-Saxons are essentially interested in hunting and fishing. It is men of Anglo-Saxon blood who stalk the grizzly bear and the fleet-footed goat into their mountainous recesses. It is men of Anglo-Saxon blood who cast the fly upon salmon streams. It is men—"

"I once caught a big bass."

"Ah, I knew it, sir!" exclaimed Cluckston enthusiastically. "I knew you had the true blood of the Anglo-Saxon within your veins. I said to Mr. Body before leaving home that we must have Mr. Larned as a patron of our society."

"What has Mr. Body to do with your present mission?"

"He is the publisher."

"Is he, really?" asked Mr. Larned thoughtfully.

"I wanted you among the first on our list," continued Cluckston. "I knew what it meant to us. Everything. And failing to find you at Ottawa, by a fortunate coincidence I have found you on the train. Now, I have here," continued Cluckston, picking up a huge volume which he had unobtrusively laid down upon entering the room, "a book which will serve to illustrate alike the extent and beauty of our work. It is the intention to set forth in a series of five volumes the achievements of

Anglo-Saxons in the field of recreation and sport. We shall cover Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the United States, wherever there breathes the sporting spirit of the Anglo-Saxon. It will be beautifully illustrated. By the way, did you have a photograph taken of that bass?"

"No," said Larned sadly. "It was years ago. I was only a youngster, but I still remember the play of the line, the tingle of my blood, the—"

"Anglo-Saxon blood," murmured Cluckston, fondly hanging upon Larned's words.

"I remember the smell of the pines, the biting of the wind and—the slime of the fish-worms."

Cluckston looked at the Minister apprehensively. "May I ask the weight of your bass?" he politely enquired.

"It weighed seven pounds, if it weighed an ounce."

"You should have had it mounted," advised Cluckston. "We'll have a number of photographs of the biggest fish caught by Anglo-Saxons, in our volumes. We'll have innumerable representations of Anglo-Saxon trophies in these beautiful books," he said, patting his sample volume affectionately. "Too bad your bass will not be represented. You should have had it mounted," he repeated.

"I couldn't have had that fish mounted," said Larned impatiently, "because it got away before I landed it."

Cluckston looked at the Minister sadly. "You are spoofing," he declared reproachfully.

"Not at all," said Larned. "What I have told you is the fondest recollection of my sporting life."

"But the weight, Mr. Larned," protested Cluckston. "You said it turned the scale at half a stone."

"Yes," said Larned, "fully that."

"But how could you weigh a fish you had not landed?" asked Cluckston incredulously.

"The thought world is the real world," Larned with the air of a mystic, assured him.

"Re-mark-able," commented Cluckston, evidently bewildered and unconvinced.

"Psychology is a peculiar branch of knowledge," commented Larned, looking at his watch.

"Well, well. Isn't it?" agreed Cluckston. "I have often said so, Mr. Larned. At times it is almost withering. But your reference to psychology reminds me of my mission to Canada. About our new work—we want you represented."

"I am afraid my achievements in sport do not entitle me to a place in your work, Mr. Cluckston."

"You leave that to me," said Cluckston in a tone that would have inspired confidence in a less modest breast than Larned's. "We have an expert writer in this country who does nothing but handle such cases as yours. He knows how to make the best—"

"Of a bad job."

"No. I was going to say the best representation of the works of busy men who, like yourself, passionately attached to out-door sports, have found little time in which to gratify their inclinations. You leave that to me," he repeated, bringing from his capacious inside pocket an order-form and a fountain pen.

"How is our Society for Promoting Trade Within the Empire succeeding?" asked Larned. "I am a member, you know."

"Excellently," said Cluckston, resting the order-form upon his knee and wondering whether he should risk writing three pages in Mr. Larned's contract form or play for safety with two.

"I haven't heard much of it recently."

"We had a series of articles on the subject in the papers at home. In fact, a bound volume of articles on the subject by statesmen the Empire over, was sent to the reading rooms. It was beautifully bound, half morocco," insisted Mr. Cluckston.

"It was bound all right," corroborated Larned. "But we were supposed to be heading off the growing commercial prestige of the Yankees. Wasn't that the peril of the hour then?"

"Yes," admitted the truthful Cluckston reluctantly.

"Each hour has its perils."

"Exactly."

"And an organisation for each hour," continued Larned, "with now and then one for the quarters."

Cluckston did not reply. He sat intently studying the face of the Minister.

"Our trade with the United States has been growing by leaps and bounds, in spite of our organisation."

"Yes," again admitted Cluckston, mentally deciding to ask Mr. Larned for only one page in the forthcoming work upon the achievements of Anglo-Saxons in sport.

"I suppose changing conditions have meant changing movements."

"Exactly. I have often said so," cried Cluckston, thanking the star of his nativity that he had not presented to Mr. Larned a contract form calling for less than three pages.

"Changing conditions mean changing movements," he echoed.

"Apparently the movements do not change conditions," commented Larned dryly. "But I must ask you to excuse me," he added, as the train glided into the environs of Rutland, Vt. "I must send a telegram at this station."

As Larned was walking through the parlour-car from the diner that evening, he saw Cluckston, who, with cap over his eyes, was half-reclining within his chair —and sleeping. Larned softened and quickened his step, hoping not to disturb the slumbering traveller —and then suddenly changing his mind, occupied an adjoining vacant seat. For a few moments he sat staring at a huge, English-made travelling-bag that leaned against

Cluckston's chair and bore the initials — "T. G. K.-L.' Larned drummed his fingers impatiently upon the arm of the chair. Then he coughed.

Cluckston rubbed his eyes. "Oh! Mr. Larned," he said, sitting upright with a start.

"Would you care to come into my room for a smoke?" asked the Minister with kindly warmth.

"Certainly, certainly. You are most kind," answered the dazed and delighted Cluckston. "I must have been dozing," he said apologetically, as he arose to follow.

For some time the two men smoked and talked about the weather, and compared the train service in America with that of Great Britain; and complained, as travellers will, of the annoyance of train delays, and then the Minister asked:

"Do you know Mr. Ken-Lake?"

"Indeed, yes," was the reply. "A very capable man, and a member of one of our county families. The Ken-Lakes are a very old family, have been in Surrey since—since there has been a Surrey," said Cluckston, whose knowledge of genealogy was exceedingly limited.

"He is an ardent Imperialist," ventured Larned encouragingly.

"One of our brilliant workers," corroborated Cluckston. "But an amateur," he added with a shade of depreciation. "I say, Mr. Larned," asked Cluckston, lowering his voice, "would you care for a glass of very rare Scotch? Very rare in these days," he added with a mirthless chuckle.

"Thank you, not now, Mr. Cluckston. You are most kind in the suggestion," he added, with the intention of relieving his companion, who was apparently embarrassed

"I hope I haven't exceeded the bounds of good form in the suggestion," replied Cluckston. "I have been assured that it is a custom of the country to offer one's fellow-travellers a drink when possible, and I have a flask with me."

"It used to be a custom," said Larned. "Now it is a tradition," he explained. "You are to be commended for observing it. Englishmen are not supposed to be adaptable," he said with a smile. "If you are thirsty, you'll find a glass and water in the wash-room. Don't let my abstinence restrain you."

Cluckston smiled his appreciation and promptly disappeared. Returning in a few minutes, he fairly beamed with self-satisfaction, and with just a shade of abandon in his voice, said, "I call that jolly good of you, Mr. Larned."

"We were speaking of Ken-Lake," was the unexpected reply. "I presume he is very rich."

"Landed estates," said Cluckston indefinitely, as he restored his flask to his pocket.

"He is ambitious politically."

"Rather," pronounced Cluckston judicially. "I expect to meet him in New York," he added with an air of importance.

"Yes," encouraged the Minister.

"In fact, I am taking something down to New York for him," said Cluckston with an air which bespoke importance.

Larned immediately thought of the travelling-bag.

"Is he sailing for home?"

"Ah, well, now, I can't say as to that. You know, Mr. Larned, it is hard to determine the whims and forecast the movements of an amateur. I have heard it said that Mr. Ken-Lake is about to make an alliance with one of the richest families in America. Of course, it may be merely idle gossip."

Larned strove to conceal the interest he felt in the turn of the conversation. "America is a big place," he said casually. "You didn't, by any chance, intend to include Canada, did you?"

"I think Mr. Ken-Lake's fiancée lives somewhere near Montreal," answered Cluckston vaguely. "How late are we?"

"It's past ten," said Larned, looking at his watch. "Three hours late, damn it."

"Most exasperating," agreed Cluckston, inwardly wondering at Mr. Larned's unusual display of irritation.

"Brush you off?" asked the porter, poking his chocolate-shaded face in the doorway.

"I am awfully grateful for your courtesy, Mr. Larned," said Cluckston on retiring. "And I am going to call upon you when we return to Ottawa."

"Do," replied the Minister shortly, as he turned in response to the demands of the ostentatiously brushing porter.

CHAPTER THE THIRTY-SECOND

IN WHICH LORD STEELETON AND BENJAMIN BODY DISAGREE

In the dim light of the gloomy library on Portman Square, Lord Steeleton sat staring at a cablegram which lay, face up, on his writing table. With hands in his pockets and wrinkled brow, he re-read its words and pondered upon their significance. Then he arose and walked towards the windows out of which Larned had some weeks before stared into the foggy square. An Englishman would not have broken his word; an Englishman's word was sacred. All the preparations had been made for the *coup d'état* which was to inaugurate the new régime of empire; and all were dissipated by the action of this incomprehensible man—Larned. True, Sir Henry Bateman had refused to enter the House of Lords, but surely that could not have accounted for Larned's attitude. Sir Henry had offered to give him the premiership; that was established by agents whose source of information was to be trusted; further, it was almost a matter of common knowledge. The offer should have been sufficient for Larned. The progress of the Empire could not be stayed by sentimental consideration for a man who was too weak for the work in hand. The thing was incredible. So reasoned Steeleton.

Upon turning from the window he upset a vase of red roses, and gave utterance to an impatient "damn". He called for his hat and cane, and set forth bent upon consulting the resourceful Benjamin Body. What a shock it would be to that intrepid advocate of Imperial Federa-

tion. For some weeks Steeleton had been attending organisation meetings in the counties, and had missed the strong assuring advice of his colleague.

Having spent half of his active life in commerce, Steeleton was now finding an outlet for his still well-preserved energy in politics. I would not have the reader understand that Imperial politics were a mere vent for Steeleton's energy. He loved the idea that is British and, having the time and the means, devoted both to what he believed to be the furtherance of that idea. He realised his political limitations, and the more readily accepted the advice of Body, whose genius for politics was unquestioned. At times he had contrasted the practices of commerce and politics (not without disparagement to the latter); but felt that the world—at least the political world—had to be taken as it is. At times there were paths that had to be followed which were not to his liking; but Body's explanations and Body's enthusiasm had made the going easier.

Arriving at the dingy grey-stone building upon the first floor of which is situated the office of Benjamin Body, Steeleton let himself in at the side door known only to the chosen few, climbed the steps and walked brusquely into the outer office.

"Mr. Body left word that he was not to be disturbed," objected Scribbs.

"I am sorry, but the business will not admit of delay," and Steeleton brushed past the protesting secretary and opening the door of the private office, found his colleague standing in a reverie before a huge map of the world. Steeleton gave vent to an introductory "Ahem." Mr. Body stood as one transfixed, continuing to stare at the map, and the intensity of his gaze turned the eyes of the visitor in its direction. It was an ordinary map, such as may be seen in many a man's office, with this exception: it was studded with different coloured pins. There were red pins, black pins, brown pins, yellow pins, green pins, pins of every colour and shade. For a few moments,

together the two men stood gazing at the map, which almost covered one side of the room.

"B."

Lord Steeleton received no answer.

"B.B."

And still there was no answer. Steeleton placed his hand upon Body's shoulder and, raising his voice, said loudly:

"Body."

That gentleman turned with a start, as if awakening from a dream.

"I have some bad news for you."

"Ah, you here, Steeleton?" asked Body.

"I have some bad news for you," repeated Steeleton mournfully.

"Ah, bad news? What? What? Have you heard from Cluckston?"

"No, from Ken-Lake about Larned. Here is the message."

"Larned?" questioned Body. "Oh, yes. The Canadian we are going to make Prime Minister."

He took the cablegram and read aloud:

"Things here most unsatisfactory. Cannot understand. Denral does not appear to be in support of our plans. Returning by first boat.—K.-L."

"Denral," said Mr. Body in perplexity. "I can't remember having heard that name before."

"Larned backwards," explained Steeleton. "I am afraid my first impressions were right. You may remember my having had difficulty in understanding Larned's hesitancy when I offered him our assistance. We have built an integral part of our plans upon him, and apparently he has failed us. It's a shocking blow to the cause. I am sorry, Body. I hope you do not consider me entirely to blame. I am sorry," he repeated.

"Look, Steeleton, look at those red pins," cried Body, waving his thin hand towards the wall. "See how they extend throughout the world. Look how they are covering North America. It will soon be all red." And in his enthusiasm Body dropped the cablegram.

"What do all the pins mean?" asked Steeleton, picking up the discarded message.

"Why, don't you know? But I forget: you haven't seen the map before. It is my latest creation. The different colours represent the different races and their locations. It is an ethnological map, brought up to date, prepared by Prof. Goodby, who has devoted a lifetime to ethnological studies. The red pins represent the Anglo-Saxons—the good red blood of the Anglo-Saxons. See how it is infiltrating the world. Re-mark-able, isn't it?"

"I am afraid I can't see the bearing upon Imperial Federation."

"Imperial Federation?" repeated Body.

"I can't see what all the red pins you have placed on the map of the United States have to do with the project we have in hand."

"Any fool can be destructive. It takes a man with brains to be constructive."

"I am sorry you think me a fool," said Steeleton distantly.

"I didn't mean it that way, Steeleton. But you know when one has become wrapped up in a scheme, he is likely to be impatient of criticism. I have been working on this thing for weeks, and what I want now is support. Enthusiasm. Nothing can be done without enthusiasm, Steeleton, and with it—enthusiasm and organisation—all things are possible."

"You must remember that I have not been taken into your confidence on this new development."

"Ah, yes, I had forgotten that. Of course, you can't be expected to enthuse about something you know nothing about. But let us look at the map again. There is

the story. Look at the red pins. Study the strategic points they occupy on the world's surface. We Anglo-Saxons are destined to be the world's dominating race."

"Who are the Anglo-Saxons?" asked Steeleton.

"I think you asked me that before," answered Body impatiently. "We Anglo-Saxons will be the dominating race," he continued, dismissing Steeleton's question, "if we can but organise. And we can organise. We can do anything with organisation and enthusiasm."

Lord Steeleton turned on his heel. Mr. Body, also turning from the map, sat down in his favourite chair behind his work-table, and motioned his companion to be seated.

"I should have thought we had outgrown that sort of thing," said Steeleton, wondering at his own temerity in so sharply addressing a man of such outstanding genius. "The struggle for race domination once committed the world to—all but destruction," and made bolder by the sound of his own words, he continued: "When one race dominates, necessarily another is dominated, and that other race loses its freedom. It was not German domination that was wrong; it was domination. It was not only Belgian freedom that was imperilled; it was freedom. Surely the lesson has been burned into mankind; the scars are still livid."

Lord Steeleton spoke earnestly. He had devoted himself unsparingly to the winning of the war. He had felt its burdens; he knew its sorrows; he knew some of its lessons. Like many another man, he had for years followed his instincts and prided himself upon their worth. It was only upon finding many of his old-time conclusions advanced in self-defence by the enemy that he had questioned their soundness, and been brought to a realisation of their fallibility. He had not yet worked out a philosophy of life; but he was stumbling towards one, and was almost conscious of its need.

"We are the superior race," said Body combatively.

"Of course, we are," replied Steeleton complacently. And perhaps any man of any race would have made the same reply, for, after all, every man determines human superiority by a self-made standard. "But why should we parade that superiority?" asked Steeleton. "The British Empire is held together by the men of our race; everyone knows that. But the British Empire is at the same time made up of the mingling of all races. At times we have had to make race distinctions. I have always thought that unfortunate ,and only bowed to your decision to assist in the isolation of Quebec upon the representation that it was a political necessity. I really cannot see that Imperial Federation requires the organisation of the Anglo-Saxons all over the world. I first heard of the idea when your man Cluckston was reporting to you some weeks ago. And then it seemed quite beyond our plans."

"It is," replied Body.

"Then what, in the name of Heaven, are you thinking of?" gasped Steeleton.

"A super-federation, a world federation, under the Anglo-Saxons. Look at the map," said Body, "and," his voice almost trembled with excitement, "tell me, are we not, as a race, so entrenched that we may dominate? Look particularly at our position in North America, the country of the future. They are our kinsmen there, and now is the time to offer them a partnership in the control of the world's affairs."

Once Steeleton had been in America. Some years before he had been obliged to visit a widowed relative at Davenport, Iowa, and had travelled from New York to the middle of the continent and back. He felt that he knew something of America. He remembered the inefficient, and at times insolent, attentions of the servants; he remembered the obsequiousness of those with whom he had mingled when they learned of his title. He remembered many things of America, but most of all did he remember the journey on the way out to Davenport, when he had,

by means of a gardener's ladder standing in the middle of a swaying railway carriage, climbed into a berth swung down from the ceiling, and there had maintained himself clinging to a rod providentially provided for the purpose. It had been a perilous night, but its perils had been insignificant compared to the disagreeableness of having to spend the night in a huge room with thirty or forty people, not one of whom he knew. The nights had been the *bête noire* of Lord Steeleton's visit to America. In Chicago he had slept on the twentieth (or was it the thirtieth?) floor of a great, white-tiled hotel. Out of a window he had looked dizzily into the street below and thought of the possibility of fire. He had heard the clanging trams, and more than once during the night he had jumped from his bed and ran to the window upon hearing the syren whistle of the fire engines. Steeleton had not delved deeply into great issues of the United States, and yet he felt he knew American character; for is not the character of a people determined upon the little things which in the aggregate, constitute life? He had not then regarded Americans as kinsmen. And as he thought of the subject, he remembered the interminable question to which he had been subjected: "What do you think of America?"—of his own astute answer: "Not at all like England"—and of the almost invariable reply: "I should *say* not."

"Language isn't everything," he told Body.

"Language and blood are almost everything."

"There is climate and there are social institutions."

"Humph!"

"And traditions."

"Humph!"

"And pursuits."

"Humph!"

"We should not be deluded into thinking that the United States came into the war primarily through a feeling of kinship for Britain. It was the merit of the cause,

as revealed by German atrocity that brought in the Americans. A friend of mine who was in New York early in the war, tells me that America's personal sympathy for the Allies was primarily for France. But these things are aside from the question. We are directly interested in the Federation of the Empire. How is it to be advanced by an organisation of Anglo-Saxons?"

Body looked steadily at his companion.

"You are losing your grip, Steeleton," he said. "You really haven't the vision I credited you with. I have told you I plan to bring about a super-federation. The British Empire will only be a part of the whole; but it will be the centre to which the strings lead, and I shall—you and I shall—be pulling the strings. They will be *ours.*"

"Are you mad?" asked Steeleton, staring at the man who sat opposite him at the table.

"Everything is possible by organisation," reiterated Body confidently. "Organisation and enthusiasm will make and unmake empires—and worlds."

"I believe you are mad," muttered Steeleton.

Body stared at his guest in silent amazement. The features, which Steeleton had once thought clear-cut, now appeared sharp; the skin that covered his face, naturally sallow, was pasty and puffy; while his eyes no longer seemed keen; they were cunning.

"You have been over-working," continued Steeleton more kindly. "Better take a run over to the Continent for a few weeks. Stretch your limbs in open fields; fill your lungs with pure air. Get out of this room for a time; it is too deeply charged with the atmosphere of London."

"You don't like the Americans," challenged Body.

"Of course, I like them," replied Steeleton. "It is true their ways are not mine; and from what I know of them (and I have been in America), they are just as opposed to changing their ways as I am to changing mine.

And probably there is no good reason why either of us should change."

"Organisation will bring about a better understanding."

"Organisation be damned!" replied Steeleton sharply. "The Americans and ourselves will get along very nicely together, so long as we both behave. The war has wiped out many of the old misunderstandings. We can work together when we have a common purpose; but the impulse to that common purpose must come spontaneously from within the people of the two countries. It cannot be manufactured—and live."

Scribbs now entered with a cablegram. "It is for you, sir. The messenger was directed here from your house," he said to Lord Steeleton.

"Another message from Ken-Lake," said Steeleton.

"What does he say?" enquired Body, as the other, reading the message, put it in his pocket and expressed no indication of disclosing its contents. "Has your friend Ken-Lake got into trouble? I never thought him capable of handling diplomatic work of size."

"I wouldn't call it trouble," said Steeleton. "Apparently he does not believe Canada ready for a change in its political status."

"What does he say?" repeated Body.

Lord Steeleton took from his pocket the cablegram, and read aloud:

"Sentiment here for Federation seems to be confined strictly to our own organisation. Please appoint someone my place. Am not sailing as intended. Have other plans in mind. Reply New York.—K.-L."

"He sent the message from Mississquoi Station," said Steeleton. "I wonder what he is doing there. Sounds like a place in the wilds."

"Deer-stalking, probably," replied the astute Body. "You can never depend upon these amateur politicians here to-day and off to-morrow. He is going to New York," he mused. "I wonder if he is abandoning the

narrow field for the wider. After all, he may be a man of vision. I think I shall wire him."

"You are giving up Imperial Federation?" questioned Steeleton.

"Widening its scope."

"We won't follow you," said the other defiantly. "You can't carry the Federationists along in your chase for chimera."

"We will see about that," replied Body, ringing for Scribbs and ordering a fresh box of stogies.

Steeleton immediately left, and after he had gone Body said to Scribbs, who had returned with the stogies: "Tell Stolz I want him at once, and ask him to come prepared to leave for America."

Lord Steeleton did not immediately proceed homewards. Slowly and thoughtfully he walked towards the Strand, and curiously enough he was thinking of a perch swinging from the top of an American sleeping-carriage. Then he looked at his watch and quickened his step. "I'll do it," he said, "if I break my neck."

Thus it happened that a few days later the names of Steeleton and Stolz were to be found on the passenger list of a ship that sailed for America.

CHAPTER THE THIRTY-THIRD

A HONEY-DEW MELON, WITH SOMETHING BEFORE AND AFTER

THE morning following his arrival in New York, the Honourable William Larned sat impatiently watching his dressing-table clock for a full half-hour, and then. turning to the telephone, called Room 211 of the *Plaza Hotel.*

"I want you to lunch with me at two at the *Claremont,*" he said in a resolute voice, and then paused. "How did I know?" he asked. "That was easy enough. The station-master told me you had taken a ticket for New York. I called Allan from the station. By the way, he and Marie were to have left for New York this morning, and will join us at dinner. I asked Allan what New York chef best broiled chops."

Again Larned paused.

"You are right: he did say Brown's. Of course, I knew that was no clue at all, for it is stag. Then I put a more direct question, and he told me to place a fair-sized bet on *The Plaza,*" laughed Larned. "I did, and here I am telephoning you. Remember, half-past one."

Never had Polly Masson looked more charming (to the Honourable William Larned) than as she stepped out of the elevator of *The Plaza* at precisely half-past one that afternoon. As she passed through the group of fastidiously-attired women, Larned could not but contrast her features, her figure, her gown (she had apparently not left home in haste) and her bearing with those of the women who thronged and gossipped and laughed in the spacious corridors.

"She is a stunning woman," Larned breathed to himself as he hurried to meet her.

We may some day reach a stage in which men will admire women solely for their intellect, their spirituality, or that mysterious something called personality, but until we reach it, men will go on being pleased with the physical charms of women—and their clothes. It may be considered by critical readers that Canada's Minister of Public Works was not in an impartial frame of mind on this particular occasion; but any man of good taste, would have admitted that there were few in the great city of beautiful women, who possessed greater charm than the Polly Masson who, recently of Mississquoi House, smilingly greeted Larned that afternoon.

It was a peacefully pleasant drive through Central Park, across town to the Hudson, and up Riverside Drive to the *Claremont*. Larned and Polly talked only of the things they saw, and apparently thought only of what they talked: the grey squirrels in the park, the policeman who, with one hand twirled his baton, and with the other his moustache; the nursery-maid who read a novel while her young charge wandered afield; the crowded streets; the elevated railway—under which they passed after turning out of the park; and the ships that lay in the Upper Hudson. Of these things they talked, and if they did not think of them, the reader may not at this stage, pry into what they thought, while the motor made its way to the café that lies just beyond Grant's tomb on the rocky banks of the Hudson.

"Mr. Larned," said the head-waiter deferentially, as Larned and Miss Masson presented themselves. It is an uncanny faculty by which the head-waiters of New York canvassaries correctly place the names of men they seldom meet, or, as in the present instance, have merely heard over the telephone.

"What a gift in practical politics," thought Larned, as he acknowledged the head-waiter's salutation

"Your table is reserved, sir."

The table to which they were led held a mass of white roses. Miss Masson smiled, and the observant head-waiter also smiled.

"We'll find a place for food," he said pleasantly.

"What are you going to have, Polly?" The familiar name came so naturally that it raised no objection; and, as the reader may have learned by experience, a public café is no place for objections.

"A honey-dew melon, with something before and after," ordered Polly.

"That's good enough for me," said Larned to the head-waiter.

"Very well, sir," and the waiter bowed and knew exactly what to serve, for at the *Claremont* strange orders are given and filled as a matter of course.

"And bring also a bottle of Beaume Grèves, 1908," said Larned as an after-thought.

"Yes, sir."

"It was a full hour later when, over a cigar and a cigarette and two small cups of coffee that grew cold, Larned asked, "Tell me why you went away, Polly?"

"There are many reasons," answered Polly indefinitely.

"Tell me the best of them, or rather the worst. No, tell me all."

"I thought you did not know all there is to know," she said slowly.

"Confession is good for the soul, and you believe in confession."

"It depends upon the status of the confessor," was the answer.

"And upon the degree of penitence."

"Heaven knows, I am penitent enough. I have been both indiscreet and wicked. All I can hope is that you will not judge me too severely."

"You are forgiven. And the penance—may I prescribe it?"

"Wait," she said, "wait until you know all. Our motor-car did not have tire trouble in front of Lord Steeleton's house."

Polly made this announcement and waited as one may be expected to wait who, having thrown a bomb, courageously tarries to watch the results.

"No?" commented Larned.

"Allan had called at your hotel," she continued, after a pause, "just to say 'Hello', and quite by chance learned that you were at Lord Steeleton's house in Portman Square. It was I who suggested we should drive there and wait until you appeared, and it was I who suggested the silly device of tire-trouble to make the meeting appear without design. The blame is mine. As I think of it now, it was all too silly for words. At least it would be if it were not also wicked. All I can say is I am sorry. I haven't even an intelligible excuse to offer."

"None is required. After all, an action must be judged at least partly by the results; and if you have been thinking me the injured party, please consider yourself mistaken. I am your grateful debtor."

"It all arose out of my interest in Imperial Federation When I heard you were at Lord Steeleton's, I suspected a plot to further that scheme. Of course, everyone knows his position in the Red Rose crowd. Tommy Ken-Lake had told me something about the movement and little bits of its plans."

"I thought you didn't know him?"

"I don't know a Mr. Ken-Lake, son and heir of the Earl of Whatcombe," replied Polly complacently.

"Oh!" ejaculated Larned. "Are you sure he told you only little bits?"

A guilty flush passed over Polly's face.

"It was probably very wrong of me to try to find out things that were supposed to be secret," she said. "But I was so interested. I am afraid Tommy did tell me more than he ought to have told," she confessed. "Was it wrong?"

"I am not quite sure," answered Larned. "Now that women are in politics, secrets may have become impossible. But please continue from the motor accident that wasn't an accident."

"We sat for a full hour and thought you would never come. Marie wanted to go home, but I insisted upon our waiting. And the mist was so misty."

Polly shivered in memory of her experience.

"I beg you not to delay."

"I was — a fool," said Polly deliberately; "and fools pay for their folly. I had pledged Allan to secrecy about the motor-car and he has teased me since—he knew —we had—met before," she faltered.

"In my trip to fairyland," added Larned.

"Before the unexpected accident to your cuff," she retorted.

Larned opened his lips as if to remonstrate.

"Never mind just now," said Polly. "I think I understand. But Allan has misinterpreted my motives. He has confused me. And perhaps troubled me the more because my conscience was not guiltless. I had difficulty in understanding my own motives, and when the motor-boat stopped on the lake—I blamed Allan for the misadventure. I thought he had taken the gasoline from the launch," she explained.

Larned shook his head in dissent.

"But I must make a full confession," she continued hurriedly. "By a mad impulse, I decided in London that it was a duty I owed my country to take you out of the Imperialist crowd. Or was it that I wanted to learn your attitude on Imperial Federation—which I thought a menace to Canada? I find it difficult to define my motives. I am afraid I hardly know what they were. I was interested in what you were going to do. I have watched your career with close interest—because—you were—one of Allan's school friends," she hesitatingly explained.

Polly raised her cup to her lips and put it back on the table untasted.

"Marie and I had read the report of a speech you had made in Badmington. We might not have seen it if Allan had not cut it out of the paper. When we found something missing, we concluded that Allan thought we ought not to read that something, so we got another copy."

"Naturally," agreed Larned.

"We were very angry at what you had said about the French-Canadians, because it seemed to us you were stirring up people who, left to themselves, might have been our friends, but who, taught to hate—and taught by lies—had become our enemies. It seemed to us that you were lying to win an election," said Polly deliberately.

"I was trying to win an election," he answered. "But then I was not quite conscious that what I said was untrue. I simply repeated that which other men had said. I repeated what others had said, and did it to meet the exigencies of the political hour. I must confess it was very, very wrong. It was not until I met you for the second time that I fully realised there was something more precious in life than winning elections. But this is supposed to be your confession, not mine."

"Politics *are* confusing," she said.

"Let us not talk about politics. There is something I want to say to you that is vastly more important, at least to me. I tried to tell you when we were marooned on the lake, Polly. I have never forgotten our first meeting. All these years its memory has clung to me. I did not know then, but I know now, that I loved, and since then I——"

"Please hear me before you say more, Mr. Larned. It is my duty to tell you all. When we met in Surrey, you were not as I had thought of you, and I have to admit that I have thought of you since the McGill dance. We were very young then," she explained.

"And very happy," he added.

Polly did not contradict Larned, but continued: "You were not as I had thought of you."

"You were disappointed?" he enquired.

"Yes," replied Miss Masson frankly. "I was disappointed. I disliked you and your views at our second meeting. After a while you became more like—like—I had thought. Then it was only your views I disliked," she said, picking up her cup of coffee once more.

"It's cold," said Larned, ordering the waiter to draw fresh cups. "And I changed my views," he continued. "And then," he added, "you didn't like a man who was to be influenced by a woman. You had thought me strong, and then you thought me weak."

"No, it was not that," she protested.

"Maybe not quite," he said, "but partially. A woman seldom respects a man whose opinion she can influence."

"That may have been true before women had the suffrage," replied Polly, "but nowadays a woman's opinion is as good as a man's in politics. It ought to be, for their votes are equal."

"The suffrage has changed the old relations of man and woman," said Larned thoughtfully. "Come to think of it, I suppose my remark was a bit priggish."

"You are forgiven," she said pleasantly.

"I knew it would end in my having to sue for pardon. It always does."

"Have you had to ask a woman's pardon very often?" she asked suspiciously, and Larned was pleased to think almost jealously.

Laughingly he assured Polly that he had spoken of man and woman generally, and not of himself in particular.

"I know you are not worrying," he continued, "nevertheless, it may relieve your conscience to know that a man whom I met when in the West had more to do with my change in views than anyone else. No, I shall not call it a change in views, for as I see things now, I hadn't what were worth calling views. I was anxious, ambitious, if you prefer, to accomplish a certain political effect, and proceeded along lines of least resistance towards it. Every-

thing has changed since you came into my life again. Recently I have had many grave discussions over Imperial Federation."

"Ah! that subject has worried me," said Polly. "At times I thought I saw relief for my countrymen in Federation, and at other times I saw them swallowed up in centralism."

"I, too, have felt at times that the French-Canadians might be the gainers, rather than the losers, under Imperial Federation. I sadly fear that our compatriots of the English tongue are slipping away from British traditions of freedom."

"Tommy is sure that we have everything to gain, as a nationality, by a closer co-operation between Canada and England."

"Tommy Ken-Lake," said Larned suspiciously. "You must tell me more about him."

"He is going to the Far West, firmly determined to bring back the head of a mountain goat, or at least a grizzly bear's skin, and, I fear, is not in good humour."

"With you or with me?"

"He is disappointed with both of us," said Polly, "and I am genuinely sorry, for he is a perfect dear."

"Extremely keen on Federation."

"He was," said Polly, looking pleasantly into Larned's eyes. "He wanted to federate us."

"I am glad he didn't succeed—with you," said Larned.

"Tommy isn't so keen on Imperial Federation as he was," she continued.

"No!"

"He thinks the little sentiment for it in this country is manufactured—and impracticable. I rather gathered from our last talk that, partly as a result of his conversation with you, he is afraid to trust our feeble

hands with the management of the Empire's affairs. You succeeded in interesting him in the science of hand-language," she added laughingly. "He says there must be something in it, for you recognised him as a blithering idiot the moment you looked at his hand. But he isn't one, Mr. Larned. In a way, he is clever. And he has a charming manner."

"Let us not talk of him now."

"Why, you asked me to tell you about him," she protested.

"I think we shall be together on the question of Imperial Federation," said Larned. "Partly as a result of my talk with Sir Henry Bateman, and partly through a knowledge of the methods by which Federation is being foisted on the public, I have reached the decision that the movement is neither in the interest of Canada nor of the Empire. The descendents of Englishmen have shown no genius for dealings with alien nationalities in Canada; there is no reason to expect happier results if they were given a voice in the management of the Empire which is so largely made up of alien nationalities. I am now convinced that that which men have found lacking in Great Britain, namely, a synthetic, co-ordination of parts, is the cause of its continued life."

"I fear I do not fully understand. You mean that free men are more apt to be agreeable to each other than if they were tied together by organisation."

"Exactly. But let us not talk politics; it seems to me we are for ever talking politics."

"And shouldn't we?"

"Not always, and particularly not now. There is something else on my mind."

"I wish you would please tell me something about your own plans for the political future."

"I have given Sir Henry my letter of resignation. He has asked me to defer my decision. Personally he sympa-

thises with my views, but publicly considers them impractic-able. Since you insist upon discussing politics, I have something in my pocket that may interest you." And Larned handed her a clipping from the *Badmington Moon,* which she read aloud:

"'It is rumoured that the Honourable Mr. Larned is retiring from politics and will not again contest the East Badmington constituency. Mr. Larned will probably resume the practice of law, which he gave up upon entering the House of Commons. It is understood a large financial house is anxious to secure his services. For years, Mr. Larned has, at very considerable personal sacrifice, devoted his services to the country, and doubtless feels that the country is not entitled to demand from him further sacrifices in connection with the strenuous work of administering the Department of Public Works.'"

"Are there such rumours?" asked Polly, returning the clipping.

"I had not heard them before."

"Then how did the newspaper man obtain the information?"

"It is the first step in the direction of undermining my organisation. After a few days the rumour may be denied; but it will certainly be repeated. It will be repeated so often that even my warmest friends will commence to cast about for a new candidate. I cannot blame them, for I have probably ceased to represent the views of my constituents. My old-time confidence in being able to re-nationalise and regenerate man by the slate-pencil is gone; I am beginning to believe, with the man I talked about at the race track, that the legislative slate requires a good sponging."

"Is he practical?"

"He scorns practical politics. And yet, after a while we may find his politics practicable. But let us talk about other things now."

"Aren't you just a little bit hard to please this afternoon?"

"I hope not."

"Do you want a *boutonnière*?"

"Thank you."

Polly selected a bud from the profusion which adorned the table and for a moment held it before his eyes. "It's white," she warned.

Larned, leaning forward, extended the lapel of his coat.

"It's going to be very becoming," she said, pinning the rose on his lapel. Then Polly leaned back, and, looking at the flower admiringly, gently clapped her hands. "The country is safe now," she said.

"Enough!" chided Larned.

"You are always evading politics."

"Because of a greater interest in something else."

"I can't see your hands. They might have told me what you wanted to talk about."

And in the garden of the *Claremont,* before the eyes of those who luncheoned (and thinking only of their own affairs, did not see), the Honourable William Larned leaned across the table and gently took Miss Masson's hand in his.

"The new language," she said with a faint smile, and did not attempt to withdraw her hand.

"It's an old language, Polly, very old. But tell me, dear, why you ran away?"

"The world seemed so impossible, and I seemed so helpless," she said weakly.

"I really think you need my help, Polly, as I need yours."

"I am sure of it, Billy."

THE END

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